TURKEY. No. 3 (1904).

CORRESPONDENCE

RESPECTING THE

ASIATIC PROVINCES OF TURKEY.

Presented to both Houses of Parliament by Command of His Majesty.
October 1904.

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Correspondence respecting the Asiatic Provinces of Turkey.

No. 1.

Sir N. O'Conor to the Marquess of Lansdowne.—(*Received October* 21.)

My Lord, *Constantinople, October* 16, 1903.

I HAVE the honour to forward to your Lordship herewith extract of a despatch from His Majesty's Acting Consul at Erzeroum, reporting on the state of the district during the past quarter.

I have, &c.
(Signed) N. R. O'CONOR.

Inclosure in No. 1.

Quarterly Report by Acting Consul Hampson.

(Extract.)

THE summer months have passed with great tranquillity throughout the Vilayet of Erzeroum. Crimes of all sorts have been rare; and, except during a few weeks, when the fear of serious events in Sasun caused considerable excitement and anxiety, the population has been remarkably calm. In view of the serious difficulties of the Ottoman Empire in European Turkey, and of the insurrection in Macedonia, this tranquillity is very striking. It is true that, at one moment, reports from Erzinjan and the surrounding district were alarming; but inquiry showed that the stories circulated in regard to the situation there were unfounded or very much exaggerated; and it appears that they were the result partly of the arrest of a number of foolish young Armenians who were in correspondence with the revolutionaries in Russia, and partly of intrigues to obtain the removal of the Mutessarif.

Nazim Bey, the Vali of Erzeroum, has undoubtedly gained much in authority and reputation during the past months. The measures which he has adopted, with the concurrence of the Mushir, in regard to patrolling the Passin and Khinis districts, and so controlling the Kurds, have met with complete success; and he has, to a considerable extent, limited the carrying of arms.

As already stated, affairs in Sasun were, for a time, very threatening; and the expectation of any serious trouble there gives rise to fears of more extended disorders. Both Mussulmans and Christians remember that the massacres of 1895 had their immediate origin in the events in Sasun in 1894; and such memories are in themselves a source of danger in a country where panics are frequent and where a combination of nervousness and fanaticism forms the ruling spirit. Orders have recently been given to use military force against the revolutionaries in Sasun, but not until the nomad tribes have left the mountains; and under these circumstances, even if these orders are carried out, it may be hoped that the operations will not entail serious excesses. The season for operations in the mountains is nearly over now, and winter, the great pacificator in these regions, is at hand.

Various bands of Armenians have crossed the frontier from Russia, some of which have been successful in reaching Sasun, while others have been met and turned back. They show very little disposition to face opposition; and I fancy that many of their movements have been undertaken as an "acquit de conscience," the result of some sort

of agreement between the Armenian Committees and those in Macedonia. It is a pity that more energy is not shown on the Russian side of the frontier in preventing them from entering Turkey.

Considerable discontent is evident at the heavy increase of taxation, the tax of 10 piastres per head on horses and cattle falling very hard on the peasants. The harvest is very abundant; but the high cost of transport by road to the sea coast prevents any profitable export of grain.

Erzeroum, September 30, 1903.

No. 2.

Sir N. O'Conor to the Marquess of Lansdowne.—(Received October 21.)

My Lord, *Constantinople, October* 16, 1903.

I HAVE the honour to forward to your Lordship herewith copy of a despatch from His Majesty's Acting Consul at Erzeroum reporting fighting with bands of Armenian revolutionaries near the frontier.

I have, &c.
(Signed) N. R. O'CONOR.

Inclosure 1 in No. 2.

Acting Consul Hampson to Sir N. O'Conor.

Sir, *Erzeroum, October* 3, 1903.

AS I had the honour to inform your Excellency by telegram yesterday, a somewhat serious conflict between Armenian revolutionaries and Turkish troops occurred near the Russian frontier on the 1st instant. The former, to the number of about eighty, sixty of whom were mounted, had crossed the frontier to the south of the Kars road, into Passin on Wednesday night, which they spent at the village of Taihoja, about three hours from the frontier.

Early on Thursday morning they proceeded, about one and a-half hours, to Yuzveren, where they found a small detachment of troops, who, with the patrols, &c., who came to their assistance, numbered somewhat under 100 men. The Armenians divided into three parties and took up strong positions, and a fight ensued which lasted the whole day. Eventually the Armenians were dispersed, leaving a good many killed and wounded, the number not yet known. The troops lost a captain, a sergeant, and five or six soldiers killed, and two officers and several privates wounded.

News of the affair only reached Erzeroum on Thursday evening, the Armenians having cut the telegraph wires, so that Hassan Kalé was the nearest available station.

The Vali at once sent two companies of infantry and a small detachment of cavalry to restore order, under Ahmed Abouk Pasha, a capable and enlightened officer; and it is thought that the Armenians who escaped have retired across the frontier, and that all fighting is at an end. The Vali informs me that he is confident that the incident is over.

As usual, the first rumours of the affair reached Erzeroum in a very exaggerated form, and there was considerable excitement and alarm. The Armenians were in a panic, fearing that they would be suspected of sympathizing with the revolutionaries, and that the Mussulmans would seize the pretext to attack them; but the Vali at once took all necessary measures to prevent disorders, and to assure the Armenians that he was convinced of their loyalty; and by yesterday afternoon confidence was completely restored.

I have, &c.
(Signed) CHARLES S. HAMPSON.

Inclosure 2 in No. 2.

Acting Consul Hampson to Sir N. O'Conor.

Sir, *Erzeroum, October* 6, 1903.

IN continuation of my preceding despatch of the 3rd instant, I have the honour to report that on Friday last, the 2nd instant, a second band of about fifty Armenian revolutionaries crossed into Passin from Russia. On the next day they met a detachment of troops at the village of Komatsor, about an hour east of Yuzveren, where the fight with the other band occurred; and fighting continued most of that day. Eventually this band also was dispersed, leaving a number of prisoners and wounded. The troops lost another captain; other losses not yet known.

Full details are wanting, the telegraph wires having again been cut; but the Vali assured me last night that he is confident of being able to deal easily with all such bands, and that he has no fear of any general disorder. He has publicly declared that he considers the incursion of these bands as acts of simple brigandage, to be dealt with by the military and police, and has strictly forbidden the intervention of any other inhabitants, whether Mussulmans or Christians. This town is perfectly quiet.

I have, &c.
(Signed) CHARLES S. HAMPSON.

P.S.—A traveller reports that he saw the bodies of at least forty Armenians who had been killed in the fighting.

C. S. H.

No. 3.

Sir N. O'Conor to the Marquess of Lansdowne.—(Received October 28.)

My Lord, *Therapia, October* 21, 1903.

I HAVE the honour to report that on the 17th instant I received a telegram from His Majesty's Vice-Consul at Kharput, stating that the French Consul at Diarbekir and other officials reported the existence in that district of an alarming degree of excitement against the Christians, which was only held in check by the determination of the Vali.

I saw the Foreign Minister on the subject, and his Excellency promised that telegraphic instructions should be sent enjoining the adoption of every precaution for the protection of the Christians.

I have, &c.
(Signed) N. R. O'CONOR.

No. 4.

Sir N. O'Conor to the Marquess of Lansdowne.—(Received October 28.)

My Lord, *Therapia, October* 23, 1903.

I HAVE the honour to transmit herewith copy of a despatch which I have received from the Acting British Consul at Erzeroum, giving the details of the recent fighting between the Ottoman troops and bands of Armenian revolutionaries attempting to enter Turkey from across the Russian frontier.

There appear to have been three different bands, who were successively engaged by the troops, and the losses of the Armenians were estimated at over sixty and those of the troops at about forty.

Mr. Hampson considers that this desperate move of the Armenian insurgents has entirely failed, and that there were no signs of any desire to assist them on the part of the Armenians on this side of the frontier.

I have just received a further despatch (of which a copy is inclosed) from Erzeroum, stating that there has been no further fighting near the frontier and that everything there seems now quiet. A considerable number of revolutionaries, however,

are said to have escaped to Sasun or to be hiding in the villages. Mr. Hampson draws attention to the absence of any pillaging or excesses on the part of the troops engaged in these operations.

I have also received a report from Mr. Hampson to the effect that the idea of offensive operations against the revolutionaries at Sasun has been abandoned, and that the troops have come down from the mountains.

I have, &c.
(Signed) N. R. O'CONOR.

Inclosure 1 in No. 4.

Acting Consul Hampson to Sir N. O'Conor.

Sir, *Erzeroum, October* 9, 1903.

IN continuation of my despatch of the 6th instant, I have the honour to give the following details of the events near the frontier:—

On the night of the 30th September a band of about eighty Armenians, mostly mounted, and all well armed, crossed from Russia into Passin, and reached the village of Taihoja.

There a single Mussulman villager held them at bay until the arrival of a detachment of about forty soldiers. The Armenians then took up a strong position in a disused fort, and fighting went on during the whole of the 1st October, the Armenians losing about thirty-five killed; the soldiers, who had been gradually reinforced until they slightly outnumbered the enemy, about twenty. That night the Armenians dispersed, a small band of about fifty retiring to the village of Yuzveren, where they occupied a stable. The soldiers followed them, and, not knowing their position, suffered a loss of ten or twelve men by the fire suddenly opened on them from the stable. This, and the heavy rain which came on, forced the soldiers to take shelter, and the Armenians took advantage of this to retire across the frontier.

On the 2nd October a second band, of about fifty, crossed into Passin to Komatsor, where a fight occurred on the 3rd, in which both sides suffered some losses; but that night this band also was driven back across the frontier.

On the 4th a third band attempted to cross into Alashgird, further towards the south-east, but were met and driven back, a few casualties occurring on each side.

Since then no further fighting has taken place; and the Vali assures me that all is quiet. He believes that most of those who recrossed the frontier were captured by Russian troops who had come up.

His Excellency puts the losses of the Armenians at over sixty, the losses of the troops being about forty. He says that all necessary measures have been taken to meet any further attacks, additional mounted police and a considerable supply of ammunition having been sent to the frontier; and he appears to have no anxiety for the future.

Two battalions of infantry, one from Khinis, the other from Dersim, are on their way here as a measure of precaution.

Outside the actual fighting, no disorders of any sort appear to have occurred, the inhabitants remaining quiet.

It would seem as if this desperate move on the part of the revolutionaries had entirely failed; and, as the Vali says, the ultimate result may be good. On the one hand, the revolutionaries have seen that they can hope for no assistance from the Armenians on this side of the frontier; on the other hand, the Government and Mussulman population have received proof of the loyalty of the Armenians here. Moreover, the fact that the population in general has remained perfectly quiet during these events is most reassuring.

The Vali has taken every precaution, and has done much to maintain confidence, constantly walking about the bazaars, &c.

I have, &c.
(Signed) CHARLES S. HAMPSON.

P.S.—The Armenians seem to have fought desperately. The Vali told me of one man who, lying on the ground with six bullet wounds, continued to fire his revolver. I believe that only three prisoners have been taken. The bands are said to have been

formed chiefly of Armenians from Georgia, and the language they spoke was Georgian. They are accused of having committed outrages, and cut off the noses of Mussulman villagers.

C. S. H.

Inclosure 2 in No. 4.

Acting Consul Hampson to Sir N. O'Conor.

Sir, *Erzeroum, October* 13, 1903.

WITH reference to my despatch of the 9th instant, I have the honour to state that there has been no further fighting near the frontier, and that everything there seems now quiet.

A considerable number of the revolutionaries are said to have escaped to Sasun or to be hiding in the villages, and it is feared that they may cause trouble.

Ten prisoners have been brought here, half of whom are said to be Russian subjects.

I desire to call your Excellency's attention to the admirable manner in which Ahmed Abouk Pasha has carried out these operations, and especially to the absence of any pillaging or excesses in the villages, against which the strictest orders were given. This would undoubtedly have been far otherwise had not the Vali wisely insisted on Ahmed Pasha being in command over the head of the notorious Tewfik Pasha, who is Commandant on the frontier.

I have, &c.
(Signed) CHARLES S. HAMPSON.

No. 5.

Sir N. O'Conor to the Marquess of Lansdowne.—(Received November 4.)

My Lord, *Constantinople, October* 29, 1903.

I HAVE the honour to forward to your Lordship herewith a despatch from Mr. Hampson, Acting Consul at Erzeroum, as to the reported strength and organization of the Armenian revolutionaries.

I have, &c.
(Signed) N. R. O'CONOR.

Inclosure in No. 5.

Acting Consul Hampson to Sir N. O'Conor.

Sir, *Erzeroum, October* 19, 1903.

IT is very difficult to obtain reliable information as to the numbers, organization, and plans of the Armenian revolutionaries ("Fedaï") in Sasun; and it is with great hesitation that I report to your Excellency the following details which have reached me:—

According to these statements, the "Fedaï" have gained greatly in numbers and strength lately. They are said to number now between 5,000 and 6,000, all well armed, drilled, and organized. They are completely masters of the mountains south of the Moush Plain, and their authority extends to many villages in the plain, and to a large extent to the town of Moush itself.

Their Chief, Andronik, is a very able man, and is implicitly obeyed. The military organization is under the command of a certain Toumanoff, an Armenian from the Caucasus, who was in the Russian army, and is said to have been an officer.

What the plans of the "Fedaï" may be I am unable to say, but if these reports are true, it seems certain that in the near future they may be expected to play an important rôle in this country.

I have, &c.
(Signed) CHARLES S. HAMPSON.

No. 6.

Sir N. O'Conor to the Marquess of Lansdowne.—(Received November 23.)

My Lord, *Constantinople, November 17, 1903.*

I HAVE the honour to forward to your Lordship herewith copy of a despatch from His Majesty's Acting Consul at Erzeroum, reporting the calling out of Hamidieh troops and the demand of the Vali that they should be withdrawn from the villages in which they had been quartered owing to the complaints against their conduct.

I have, &c.

(Signed) N. R. O'CONOR.

Inclosure in No. 6.

Acting Consul Shipley to Sir N. O'Conor.

Sir, *Erzeroum, November 4, 1903.*

I HAVE the honour to report that ten squadrons of the Hamidieh troops were called out directly after the encounters with Armenian revolutionaries, reported in Mr. Acting Consul Hampson's despatches of the 3rd and 6th ultimo, and distributed along the frontier and in and about ten villages in the plain of the Araxes.

As was only natural, complaints of ill-treatment began coming in at once from the villagers, but, owing to circumstances, do not seem to have been received with much sympathy in any quarter.

An incident, however, that occurred to my party on our way here, and which I reported to the Vali, gave me the opportunity of pointing out to his Excellency that the presence in Armenian villages of Kurds, who had only just stopped short of personal violence to a Consul and his escort, and whose Chief (a Hamidieh officer) refused to come and apologize, was not calculated to hasten the restoration of that tranquillity which had existed before the untoward events of last month, and which his Excellency, I knew, desired above all people to see restored.

My French and Russian colleagues made similar representations, the latter, I may add, guaranteeing the impossibility of fresh Armenian bands crossing the Russian frontier till next spring.

The Vali informed me this morning that he had demanded the withdrawal of the Hamidieh troops from the villages and their concentration at Hassan Kaleh and Erzeroum, with a view to their ultimate disbanding in a week or ten days' time. They are, where necessary, to be replaced by Regulars.

The Vali has, moreover, given orders that the troops are to deliver receipts for all foods which they may take from the villagers, and I am trustworthily informed that this is being done.

Every one seems agreed that this vilayet is absolutely tranquil, and likely to remain so during the winter months.

News from Diarbekir is equally reassuring.

I have, &c.

(Signed) A. SHIPLEY.

No. 7.

Sir N. O'Conor to the Marquess of Lansdowne.—(Received November 23.)

My Lord, *Constantinople, November 17, 1903.*

I have the honour to forward to your Lordship herewith copy of a despatch from His Majesty's Vice-Consul at Van, reporting Armenian revolutionary movements in that neighbourhood and a Turco-Armenian fight near Delibaba.

I have, &c.

(Signed) N. R. O'CONOR.

Inclosure in No. 7.

Vice-Consul Tyrrell to Sir N. O'Conor.

Sir, *Van, October* 27, 1903.

AS there have been many rumours concerning the incursions of armed bands of Armenian revolutionists from Russia and Persia, and as these rumours appear to be spread in Constantinople and to reach the European press, I have the honour to acquaint your Excellency, without loss of time, with the facts, so far as I could ascertain them on the spot, of a recent affair which has caused some sensation here, and probably been exaggerated everywhere.

It was while in the Bulanik district that I first heard fairly well-authenticated news of revolutionists. There the Military Commandant, Ahmed Pasha, Ferik of the 4th Cavalry Division, expressed himself as uneasy at my travelling without a military escort, and told me that armed revolutionists had crossed the frontier west of the Keusse Dagh, and that, though there had been fighting there, many of them had forced their way through the Turkish troops, were lurking in the Kortevin Dagh, north of Melasgird, and intended to reach Sasun to join the revolutionists, whom the Turks always believe to be there in force. As I went north from Melasgird I came across no traces of them, and had no news of any such bands being in the vicinity; and I think Ahmed Pasha's apprehensions were groundless, and that no revolutionists had hitherto reached the neighbourhood of Melasgird, nor succeeded in getting far beyond the Russian frontier.

At Patnotz I heard of revolutionists (500 to 1,000, according to fancy) having crossed the frontier, of severe fighting at Delibaba, and that the Armenian village of Delibaba had been sacked and burnt by the Turkish soldiers. As my intention had been to go to Kara Kilisse, I decided to make a short detour and visit Delibaba *en route*.

On my way thither I found the people apprehensive of further incursions. The local Hamidieh Kurds were having arms issued to them, and were being organized to assist the troops against the threatened invasion. I met an ammunition train on its way to Kara Kilisse, and there were evidences that the Turks were reinforcing their garrisons in the Alashgird Plain.

I found that the rumours as to Delibaba were absolutely false. I spent a night in the village. There had been fighting near it; but no harm had been done in the village itself, nor, so far as I could see, had the inhabitants suffered in any way. The Turks were strengthening their cordons on the frontier, and a second battalion had been sent from Erzeroum to Delibaba (one battalion is permanently stationed in the latter place). Ahmed Pasha, Liva of the 13th Infantry Brigade, had come from Erzeroum to inquire into the circumstances and supervise preventive arrangements. He was distributing arms to some of the local Hamidieh regiments, and it was by his orders that extra ammunition was being sent to Alashgird.

It would appear that the whole affair had been much exaggerated, and the facts would seem to be somewhat as follows :—

One hundred and twenty revolutionists, all armed, and of whom about forty were mounted, crossed the frontier near Mejingird during the first few days in October. They were working towards Delibaba, with the intention of going south from there. There was fighting with the Turkish troops at the villages of Taihoja, Komatsor, and Yuzveren, and between the latter place and Delibaba. Practically, all the revolutionists were killed; but not before a detachment of Turkish cavalry had been ambuscaded, and lost two Captains, one Lieutenant, and seven men. The Turkish infantry also suffered some casualties during the fighting. The dead are said to have been mutilated by the revolutionists, whose object is believed to be to rouse the Turks to ferocity, and to make them retaliate on harmless villagers and to commit atrocities, and so attract outside attention.

Ahmed Pasha told me that four or five revolutionists had been captured alive, and had been sent to Erzeroum as prisoners. I do not know if this is true. He said that these men bore Russianized names, and that they had declared that they meant to go to Sasun, and that there were others who would come. He said that nearly all the band had Russian passports or documents showing them to be Russian subjects, and that they were all armed with the present Russian Government rifle, and had Russian Government equipment, while their horses were branded so as to show they belonged to the Russian army.

On the other hand, the Bimbashi who had been actually in command during the fighting, before the arrival of Ahmed Pasha, told me that this was an exaggeration, and that, though there were Government rifles among their arms, they were by no means universally armed with them. When I asked to see the rifles, they could only show me an odd assortment of Berdans and Martinis.

They said that not a single revolutionist had been able to make his way further south, though some may possibly have escaped back towards the Russian frontier.

As far as I could ascertain from inquiry and report, the only material damage done was at Yuzveren, where an ambar (store-house) in which some revolutionists were defending themselves was burned. Though my movements were naturally closely observed by the Turkish officials with whom I came in contact, and certain things may have been hidden from me, I think I can say that up to that time the soldiers had behaved well and had been kept well in hand, and I saw no signs of suffering in the Armenian villages of the districts through which I passed. In addition to regular troops, the 57th, 61st, and 62nd Regiments of Hamidieh were represented in the operations which led up to the capture of this small band of revolutionists; and I met men of the 5th, 11th, and 12th Hamidieh Regiments on their way to Delibaba to receive arms.

I heard that the summons has been received by some of the Hamidieh with a distinct lack of enthusiasm, even with the prospect of pillage to which such an occasion might well give rise.

While in Alashgird and Bayezid I heard that revolutionists had crossed from Persia, and that there had been encounters with them near Van. There is no foundation whatever for these rumours.

I have, &c.
(Signed) G. E. TYRRELL, *Captain.*

No. 8.

Sir N. O'Conor to the Marquess of Lansdowne.—(*Received November* 30.)

My Lord, *Constantinople, November* 24, 1903.

I HAVE the honour to inclose extract of a despatch from His Majesty's Acting Consul at Erzeroum remarking on the situation in Sasun.

I have, &c.
(Signed) N. R. O'CONOR.

Inclosure in No. 8.

Acting Consul Shipley to Sir N. O'Conor.

(Extract.) *Erzeroum, November* 16, 1903.

WITH reference to Mr. Acting Consul Hampson's despatch of the 19th October, I have the honour to inform your Excellency that it is impossible to determine, even approximately, the number of Armenians actually under arms in the Sasun districts.

Mr. Hampson and his colleagues estimated them at from 5,000 to 6,000, and this is the estimate generally accepted here among the foreigners. The figure was reached by counting up the number of Fedaï known to have existed in Sasun last spring and those reported to have crossed into it since, the number of the male population of six villages in the immediate neighbourhood of Moush and that of the whole of Talori, and some 300 or 400 youths who are missing from the town itself and are supposed to have joined the revolutionaries.

On the other hand, Mr. Vice-Consul Heathcote agrees with the local authorities here and in Bitlis and with such Armenians and Turks, coming from Moush, as I have obtained details from, in stating the number of Fedaï at no more than 300, whereas my colleagues insist on their being 1,000 at least, more probably 1,500. Mr. Heathcote does not, of course, include in this number "the villagers who may be potential revolutionaries," but these, my other informants maintain, cannot exceed 1,200.

One new feature has been introduced into the general aspect of affairs during the last few months, viz., the co-operation of the Kurds with the Armenians. It is a well-known fact that one of the reasons which deterred the Government from attacking Sasun this summer was the unexpected attitude of the Kurds, who refused to join in the proposed attack; and my French colleague now informs me that negotiations which have been going on for some time between the Kurds and Armenians have, he believes, led to a compact, whereby the Kurds shall maintain an attitude of strict neutrality, even if, as is not improbable, they do not actually take up arms in their defence if attacked.

Two facts point to the likelihood of the above statements: firstly, the Kurds, especially those of Sairt, supplied the Fedaï, blockaded by the troops in Sasun, with provisions this autumn; secondly, arms and ammunition for the use of the revolutionaries are being manufactured in no small quantities by Armenian workmen in Kurdish houses in the districts affected.

I am informed that a 20th division of the IVth Army Corps is being formed at Moush, but I have not as yet been able to obtain any details as to its organization.

No. 9.

Sir N. O'Conor to the Marquess of Lansdowne.—(*Received February* 1.)

My Lord, *Constantinople, January* 26, 1904.

I HAVE the honour to forward to your Lordship herewith copy of a despatch from His Majesty's Acting-Consul at Erzeroum, reporting the death of Husni Bey, Vali of Bitlis, on the 13th instant, and stating that orders had been received by the Vali of Erzeroum to disband all the Hamidiehs.

I have, &c.
(Signed) N. R. O'CONOR.

Inclosure in No. 9.

Acting Consul Shipley to Sir N. O'Conor.

Sir, *Erzeroum, January* 16, 1904.

MR. VICE-CONSUL HEATHCOTE will doubtless have informed your Excellency by telegram of the death, on the 13th instant, of the Vali of Bitlis, Husni Bey, but I would venture to express the opinion that it is of the greatest importance that his successor be not only appointed at once, but also proceed at once to his post, in spite of the season, without allowing the military party, who are already too powerful in the vilayet, time to obtain a hold on its affairs which it will be impossible to shake off.

I hear that, as it is, the Commandant has appointed himself Acting Governor.

Mehemed Husni Bey, formerly Kaïmakam of Baibourt in this vilayet, and lately appointed Mutessarif of Genj in the Vilayet of Bitlis, is now at Kharput on his way to his new post. I am informed that he is a competent official, honest and energetic. As he is on the spot, he might, to avoid delay, be appointed Vali *ad interim*, even though he might later in the year have to be replaced by another.

The Vali informed me on Thursday last that he had received orders from Constantinople to disband all the Hamidiehs at once. I understand that the Iradé was issued in consequence of a protest from the Russian Embassy against the employment of Hamidiehs on the frontier.

I have, &c.
(Signed) A. SHIPLEY.

No. 10.

Sir N. O'Conor to the Marquess of Lansdowne.—(*Received February* 15.)

My Lord, *Constantinople, February* 9, 1904.

I HAVE the honour to transmit herewith copy of a despatch which I have received from His Majesty's Consul at Erzeroum, inclosing one from His Majesty's Vice-Consul at Bitlis on the state of affairs in that vilayet, with special reference to the probability of an attack on the Armenian revolutionaries supposed to be in considerable numbers in the district of Sasun.

I spoke to the Grand Vizier on the subject a few days ago, and drew attention to the danger in view of the state of unrest among the Armenians on and beyond the Russian frontier, of which I had heard a great deal recently, of taking any ill-considered action which might give cause for a recrudescence of Armenian revolutionary activity. I earnestly warned his Highness against having recourse to military measures, with their not unlikely result of opening the door to the depredations of the Kurdish tribes, unless absolutely compelled to do so.

Ferid Pasha stated in reply that he quite shared my view in regard to any attack on Sasun, which he assured me would not take place unless the action of the revolutionaries rendered it inevitable, and he promised me that if active measures were decided on every precaution would be taken. The new Vali of Bitlis was about to start for his post and had been instructed to remain some time at Moush to examine the question of the Sasunlis.

I learn that his Highness had used similar language to the Armenian Patriarch a few days previously.

I have, &c.
(Signed) N. R. O'CONOR.

Inclosure 1 in No. 10.

Consul Shipley to Sir N. O'Conor.

Sir, *Erzeroum, January* 26, 1904.

WITH reference to the inclosed extract of a despatch from Mr. Vice-Consul Heathcote, I have the honour to report that I have obtained local confirmation from an unusually trustworthy source of the rumour which has reached Mr. Heathcote, that it has been decided to attack the Fedaï at Sasun, as soon as the snow shall have melted, *i.e.*, towards the middle of May.

I have, &c.
(Signed) A. SHIPLEY.

Inclosure 2 in No. 10.

Vice-Consul Heathcote to Sir N. O'Conor.

(Extract.) *Bitlis, January* 16, 1904.

I HAVE the honour to report that the Vali of Bitlis died somewhat unexpectedly on the 13th instant. Pending the receipt of orders from Constantinople, the Cadi, as the senior official in rank, has assumed the administration of the vilayet.

A rumour has reached me, on the authority of a member of the Council of the vilayet, that it has at last been decided to attack the Sasun revolutionaries in the spring, and that the movement will be commanded by the Mushir of the Fourth Army Corps, Zekki Pasha, in person. It is also stated that, probably in view of this decision, the military authorities have been calling for money from the funds of the vilayet.

Whether this rumour be well founded or not must be better known to your Excellency than to me, but I venture to think, if it be true, the active participation of the Mushir would be advantageous, in view of the fact that the Sasun massacres of 1894 ceased immediately on the Marshal's appearance.

If any such movement is really intended, it is more than ever important that the Vali should be a man of determination, and that he should have had time to learn something of local conditions, to enable him to restrain the excesses of civil officials, which are too apt to accompany military operations in this country.

No. 11.

Mr. Grant Duff to the Marquess of Lansdowne.—(Received February 22.)

My Lord, *Tehran, January 26, 1904.*

I HAVE the honour to inclose herewith a despatch from Mr. Wratislaw, His Majesty's Consul-General at Tabriz, reporting the movements of Armenian revolutionaries, and a projected rising in the Van district in the coming spring.

I have, &c.
(Signed) EVELYN GRANT DUFF.

Inclosure in No. 11.

Consul-General Wratislaw to Sir A. Hardinge.

Sir, *Tabriz, December 28, 1903.*

I HAVE the honour to report that during the last few weeks a considerable number of Armenian revolutionaries have passed from Russia through Persian territory into Turkey. Some 40 or 50 have gone viâ Tabriz, including the leaders, and about 200 have taken other routes. Numbers of rifles, which the revolutionaries or their supporters have bought from Russian arsenals, are also being smuggled over the Turkish frontier through the good offices of a venal Kurdish Chief, and preparations are being made for a rising in the Van district in the spring, on the assumption that the energies of the Turkish Government will be absorbed by complications in Europe as soon as the winter is over.

I am informed that the Armenians are endeavouring to persuade the Kurds to rise against the Sultan at the same time.

I have, &c.
(Signed) A. C. WRATISLAW.

No. 12.

Sir N. O'Conor to the Marquess of Lansdowne.—(Received February 22.)

(Telegraphic.) *Constantinople, February 22, 1904.*

THE Porte has received disquieting news of conflicts between Christians and Mussulmans, and of revolutionary activity in the Sasun district; at Ineghian some Mussulmans are reported to have been killed.

In the course of the earnest and repeated representations that I have made to the Grand Vizier, I begged that the Kurds might be held in check, and that, if military operations were inevitable, they might be confined to the regular army.

I was assured by his Highness to-day that the regular troops will be intrusted with the military operations against the insurgents, and that, with a view to prevent bloodshed, they shall be accompanied by three high civil functionaries.

His Highness added that he was fully alive to the danger of excesses. I ascertained at the same time that it was intended to send six or seven battalions to the disturbed districts.

No. 13.

The Marquess of Lansdowne to Sir N. O'Conor.

Sir, *Foreign Office, February* 24, 1904.

I HAVE received your Excellency's despatch of the 0th instant relative to the state of unrest among the Armenians of Sasun, and the probability of an attack being made by the Turkish authorities upon the Armenian revolutionaries in that district.

I entirely approve your action in calling the attention of the Grand Vizier to the matter, and I request that you will continue to impress upon the Turkish Government the danger of any hasty and ill-considered measures against the Armenians.

I am, &c.
(Signed) LANSDOWNE.

No. 14.

Sir N. O'Conor to the Marquess of Lansdowne.—(Received February 29.)

My Lord, *Constantinople, February* 23, 1904.

WITH reference to my despatch of the 9th instant, I have the honour to report that, on the 13th and 14th instant, I received from Mr. Heathcote, Vice-Consul at Bitlis, telegraphic reports as to the condition of tension and anxiety reported to exist in the neighbourhood of Moush.

The immediate cause appears to have been an affray between revolutionaries and tax-collectors, but a general belief was prevalent that the Kurds were ready for excesses, and that orders from Constantinople existed to which they could appeal in justification. Mr. Heathcote added that great good would result from any indication that the central Government really desired tranquillity.

I accordingly commissioned Mr. Lamb, First Dragoman of the Embassy, to communicate the sense of Mr. Heathcote's Report to the Grand Vizier, and to add a warning as to the dangers attendant on any excesses by the Kurds or Mussulmans of Armenia.

His Highness replied that bands of revolutionaries, variously estimated at a few hundred to a thousand, were now in the Sasun Mountains, whence they would descend in the spring to make disturbances in the plain. No decision had been come to as to the measures to be taken against them, pending the report of the new Vali of Bitlis, who was then leaving for his post with strict orders to prevent excesses and to tranquillize the population. On the following day, Mr. Lamb renewed his representations to the Sultan's First Secretary, who laid them before His Majesty. The Sultan sent me a message, in reply, to the effect that he had taken note of the communication, that the new Vali had received categorical instructions in the matter, and that fresh instructions should be telegraphed to the Acting Vali for his guidance, pending the former's arrival.

The Grand Vizier has since informed me that some revolutionaries, under the notorious leader Andronik, had come down from Sasun and taken forcible possession of a Mussulman village. A telegram just received from Mr. Heathcote states that the latest news from Moush shows that anxiety there is on the increase.

I have, &c.
(Signed) N. R. O'CONOR.

No. 15.

The Marquess of Lansdowne to Sir N. O'Conor.

Sir, *Foreign Office, March* 4, 1904.

I HAVE received your Excellency's despatch of the 23rd ultimo relative to the condition of tension and anxiety reported to exist in the neighbourhood of Moush.

I approve the representations which you have made in the matter to the Ottoman Government.

I am, &c.
(Signed) LANSDOWNE.

No. 16.

Sir N. O'Conor to the Marquess of Lansdowne.—(Received March 7.)

My Lord, *Constantinople, March* 1, 1904.

WITH reference to my despatch of the 23rd ultimo respecting the danger of disturbances in the Sasun district, I have the honour to report that, according to official information communicated by the Grand Vizier, the Armenian revolutionaries, to the number of several hundreds, under the leadership of Andronik, have for some time past been endeavouring to provoke the Mussulman population by attacking their villages on the outskirts of Sasun, driving out the inhabitants and appropriating their arms. A telegram received by the Porte on the 29th February from the Mutessarif of Genj announced that a band of fourteen Armenians from Talori entered the village of Ineghian, in the Kulp Caza, killed and mutilated three Moslems, carried off two women, and committed many other acts of violence. The Chief Andronik is supposed to have established his head-quarters in the village of Dapik, the centre of a nahié of which the Turkish Mudir and officer of gendarmerie had fled to Moush. The insurgents display a blue flag with the emblem of an eagle.

In consequence of this intelligence, and the disquieting nature of recent telegrams from His Majesty's Vice-Consul at Bitlis, I caused representations to be made to the Grand Vizier in regard to the political dangers which would arise from any renewal of excesses in Armenian districts, and suggested certain precautionary measures. His Highness stated most positively that he was keenly alive to the seriousness of the situation, and that every possible precaution would be taken to prevent the occurrence of any outrages. The Military Commanders had received the strictest instructions not to attack the revolutionaries without previously reporting the circumstances to head-quarters and obtaining specific authorization. They had further been instructed under no circumstances to allow Kurds or Hamidieh cavalry to take part in any operations which might become necessary, and in order that a sufficient force might be available to keep the Kurds in check, and to maintain the general tranquillity, six or seven battalions from the Dersim district had been ordered to proceed towards Moush to reinforce the six battalions already quartered in that neighbourhood.

Three high civil judicial functionaries had received orders to accompany the troops on all occasions, and it would be their duty to endeavour to persuade the insurgents to come to terms with the Government before actual recourse to force was made, and *procès-verbaux* would be drawn up to show that this procedure had been properly carried out.

I have, &c.
(Signed) N. R. O'CONOR.

No. 17.

The Marquess of Lansdowne to Sir N. O'Conor.

Sir, *Foreign Office, March* 10, 1904.

I HAVE received your Excellency's despatch of the 1st instant, reporting the representations which you made to the Grand Vizier on the subject of the danger of disturbance in the Sasun district. I approve the language which you held to his Highness.

I am, &c.
(Signed) LANSDOWNE.

No. 18.

Sir N. O'Conor to the Marquess of Lansdowne.—(*Received March* 21.)

My Lord, *Constantinople, March* 12, 1904.

THE general uneasiness reported by His Majesty's Consuls at Erzeroum and Bitlis to exist in the district of Sasun induced me to speak to the Sultan on the subject yesterday. I explained to His Majesty how great was the anxiety caused by the arrangements now being made for the concentration of a large military force at Moush, with the object of proceeding against the revolutionary bands which had crossed the frontier, and were endeavouring to stir up the people to insurrection. The unfortunate inhabitants, harassed as they were on one side by these bands and on the other by the exactions of the Kurds, hardly knew how to save themselves, and would evidently in their distress be driven to revolt unless the Government interfered energetically, and gave them satisfactory guarantees of protection. I believed the symptoms of fear and unrest resembled very closely those which were visible previous to the sad events of 1894 and 1895. But, however this might be, the situation seemed to me so serious that I thought it my duty to direct His Majesty's attention to it, as I was sure he was alive to the disastrous effect which would be produced by any outrages and excesses such as seemed hardly avoidable were the Hamidieh troops once in movement. His Grand Vizier had already informed me of the precautions taken to prevent the effusion of blood. I submitted, however, to His Majesty the expediency of going a step further, and of endeavouring to negotiate peaceably with the chief men of the Sasun and Moush districts, and of offering a general amnesty, provided they quietly agreed to allow the revolutionary leaders, such as Andronik and his followers, to be expelled from the country.

The Sultan observed that the idea I had thrown out seemed to him deserving of consideration, and that it had already crossed his mind. He was not, however, more explicit, but I know that he discussed the matter with the Grand Vizier this morning.

I had thought of suggesting that His Majesty's Vice-Consul at Bitlis might be used as an intermediary, but I did not like to propose it before first submitting the idea to your Lordship, and knowing to what extent the Russian Government would be inclined to co-operate with us in case of its acceptance.

I have, &c.
(Signed) N. R. O'CONOR.

No. 19.

Sir N. O'Conor to the Marquess of Lansdowne.—(*Received March* 21.)

My Lord, *Constantinople, March* 16, 1904.

IN continuation of my despatch of the 12th instant, informing your Lordship of the suggestion I made to the Sultan at my audience on the 11th instant respecting the revolutionary movement in the Sasun and Moush districts of Armenia, I have the honour to report that the Armenian Patriarch was summoned to the Palace next day, when he was told by the Sultan's First Secretary that there were in Moush and Sasun some 400 revolutionaries, only 50 of whom were believed to have come from Persia or the Caucasus, while the rest were natives of the country. The Sultan was anxious that the state of unrest resulting from the presence of these persons should be put an end to without unnecessary bloodshed, and, if possible, without recourse to military action.

His Majesty consequently invited the Patriarch to instruct his subordinates at Moush to enter into negotiations with the revolutionaries, with a view to persuading them to disperse and return to their homes, on the understanding that they should be amnestied, and secured from further molestation.

The Patriarch suggested that a military officer should accompany his emissaries in their attempts to negotiate, in order to show that the Mission was authorized by the Imperial Government, but the suggestion was set aside.

I understand that the Patriarch is now sending instructions to the ecclesiastical authorities in Moush and its neighbourhood in the sense of the above invitation.

In view of the possibility of the miscarriage of these negotiations, I should be glad to be put in possession of your Lordship's views with regard to the suggestion brought forward in my despatch above referred to that we should, in co-operation with the Russian Government, offer the services of our officials as intermediaries between the revolutionaries and the Ottoman Government.

I have, &c.
(Signed) N. R. O'CONOR.

No. 20.

The Marquess of Lansdowne to Sir C. Scott.

Sir, *Foreign Office, March* 23, 1904.

I TOLD the Russian Ambassador to-day that we had received from Sir Nicholas O'Conor despatches pointing to a very serious condition of things in the Armenian population of the districts of Sasun and Moush. The Sultan had, it appeared, arranged with the Armenian Patriarch that he should endeavour to bring about an arrangement for pacifying these districts, based upon the withdrawal of the revolutionaries who had come in from Persia and the Caucasus, with the promise of an amnesty to the other persons implicated. In the event of the Patriarch's efforts proving unsuccessful, it was suggested that an attempt should be made by the Russian and British Vice-Consuls to bring about an amicable arrangement. It was, I said, in our opinion, clearly desirable that if our Consul took action in the matter he should do so in co-operation with his Russian colleague. His Excellency said that he should have much pleasure in repeating my proposal to the Russian Government, and he asked me to send him a Memorandum of the facts.

I am, &c.
(Signed) LANSDOWNE.

No. 21.

Memorandum communicated to Count Benckendorff, March 26, 1904.

DURING the month of February last reports were received from His Majesty's Consular officers at Erzeroum and Bitlis with regard to the serious state of unrest prevailing among the Armenians in the Moush and Sasun districts, and the probability of an attack being made by the Turkish authorities upon the Armenian revolutionaries supposed to be in considerable numbers in the district of Sasun.

His Majesty's Ambassador at Constantinople drew the attention of the Turkish Government to the danger of any ill-considered action on their part which might cause a recrudescence of Armenian revolutionary activity.

On the 11th instant His Majesty's Ambassador had an opportunity of speaking to the Sultan on this subject. He explained to His Majesty how great was the anxiety caused by the arrangements then being made for the concentration of a large military force at Moush, with the object of proceeding against the revolutionary bands which had crossed the frontier. He submitted to His Majesty the expediency of endeavouring to negotiate peaceably with the chief men of the Sasun and Moush districts and of offering a general amnesty, provided they quietly agreed to allow the revolutionary leaders to be expelled from the country.

The Sultan remarked that this idea seemed to him deserving of consideration, and that it had already crossed his mind.

Sir N. O'Conor understands that the Armenian Patriarch was shortly afterwards summoned to the Palace, and was informed by the Sultan's First Secretary that there were in Moush and Sasun some 400 revolutionaries, only 50 of whom were believed to have come from Persia or the Caucasus, while the rest were natives of the country; that the Sultan was anxious that the state of unrest resulting from the presence of these persons should be put an end to without unnecessary bloodshed, and, if possible, without recourse to military action. His Majesty consequently invited the Patriarch to instruct his subordinates at Moush to enter into negotiations with the revolutionaries, with a view to persuading them to disperse and return to their homes, on the understanding that they should be amnestied and secured from further molestation.

The Patriarch suggested that a military officer should accompany his emissaries in their attempts to negotiate, in order to show that the mission was authorized by the Imperial Government, but this suggestion was set aside.

It is understood that the Patriarch is now sending instructions to the ecclesiastical authorities in Moush and its neighbourhood in the sense of the above invitation.

In the event of the miscarriage of these negotiations, Sir N. O'Conor has suggested that His Majesty's Government and the Russian Government might offer the services of their Consular officials on the spot as intermediaries, with a view to bring about an amicable arrangement between the Armenians and the Turkish Government.

Foreign Office, March 26, 1904.

No. 22.

Sir N. O'Conor to the Marquess of Lansdowne.—(Received March 28.)

My Lord, *Constantinople, March* 22, 1904.

WITH reference to previous correspondence respecting the danger of the Armenian question again becoming acute, I have the honour to report that the Grand Vizier some days ago communicated to me a series of reassuring telegrams which he had received from the Valis of the Armenian provinces in reply to instructions forwarded to them as the result of my representations.

The Vali of Diarbekir telegraphs that he guarantees the maintenance of order in his district, but that his Highness' instructions will, nevertheless, be put into effect. The Vali of Van admitted that about a month ago some rumours of possible disturbance were in circulation, but that all was now quiet. Nazim Bey reported from Erzeroum that for a year past the Revolutionary Committees abroad had been striving to extend their propaganda in that vilayet, and were endeavouring by promises of supplying arms and other assistance to excite the Armenians to action, which would in turn provoke the Mussulman population to reprisals. Nevertheless, when last summer large revolutionary bands had crossed the Russian frontier and penetrated to a considerable distance into the Vilayet of Erzeroum, the measures taken had proved so efficient that the invaders had been entirely dispersed and driven back without any evil consequences falling on the peaceable inhabitants, even on the villages which had harboured the revolutionaries. Stringent measures had been taken to prevent any more such bands from crossing the frontier; the province was tranquil, and his Excellency was confident that no serious disturbances were to be feared.

The Vali of Sivas also telegraphed that his province was undisturbed. It was true that about a month ago alarmist rumours had been circulated at Tokat, but his inquiries had satisfied him that they were invented by the Armenians themselves, who were imposing upon certain Consuls and missionaries. Nevertheless, orders had been issued in accordance with the Grand Vizier's instructions, and, if any disorders should occur, measures would be taken to deal promptly with them, without allowing the Hamidieh Kurds to take any part therein.

The Embassy was also informed that reports from Angora, Kharpout, and Bitlis were awaited, and would in due course be communicated.

I have since had an opportunity of again calling the Grand Vizier's attention to the gravity of the situation in the Moush and Sasun districts, but his Highness insisted that the reports of anxiety and unrest amongst the Armenian and Turkish population were exaggerated, and that in any case the stringent orders that had been sent to the local authorities would not fail to have a pacifying and beneficial effect.

My Russian and French colleagues are, however, as anxious as I am on the subject, and I feel sure that both of them will advise their Governments to agree to sending their Consuls on a mediatory mission to the insurgents, should the efforts of the Patriarch, as reported in my despatch of the 16th instant, not prove successful.

I have, &c.

(Signed) N. R. O'CONOR.

No. 23.

The Marquess of Lansdowne to Sir C. Scott.

Sir, *Foreign Office, March* 30, 1904.

I TOLD the Russian Ambassador to-day, with reference to my conversation recorded in my despatch of the 23rd instant, that it had been suggested to me that it might be desirable that the French Consul should be invited to co-operate with the Russian and British Consuls in endeavouring to effect a reconciliation between the opposing parties at Sasun and Moush. His Excellency said that he saw no objection, and would telegraph my suggestion to the Russian Government.

I am, &c.
(Signed) LANSDOWNE.

No. 24.

The Marquess of Lansdowne to Sir N. O'Conor.

Sir, *Foreign Office. March* 31, 1904.

I SPOKE to the French Ambassador to-day on the subject of the serious condition of affairs in the Armenian districts of Sasun and Moush.

M. Cambon informed me to-day that M. Delcassé's views were entirely favourable to the suggestion that the Consuls of France, Russia, and Great Britain should be authorized to concert together with a view to bring about an arrangement for pacifying the disturbed districts.

His Excellency added that the French Government would send the necessary instructions to their Consuls in Armenia as soon as they learnt that the British Consuls had received similar instructions from His Majesty's Government.

I am, &c.
(Signed) LANSDOWNE.

No. 25.

Sir N. O'Conor to the Marquess of Lansdowne.—(Received April 4.)

My Lord, *Constantinople, March* 28, 1904.

WITH reference to my despatch of the 22nd instant and to previous correspondence respecting Armenian unrest, I have the honour to transmit herewith extract of a despatch which I have received from His Majesty's Vice-Consul at Bitlis, respecting the prevailing uneasiness in that province, and confirming the information already reported to your Lordship that stringent orders had been sent to the local authorities to prevent disturbances. I indulge the hope that, in consequence of the representations I have made to the Porte, no doubt will be left in the minds of the local officials that it is the desire and the will of the Central Government to prevent outrages.

The general publication of orders of this description is the best guarantee for the moment against the recurrence of anything like the incidents of 1894–1895.

I have, &c.
(Signed) N. R. O'CONOR.

Inclosure in No. 25.

Vice-Consul Heathcote to Sir N. O'Conor.

(Extract.) *Bitlis, March* 5, 1904.

I HAVE the honour to report that, during the Kurban Bairam (26th–28th February), I learnt from two distinct sources, both Mussulman, of the existence of a plan to attack the Armenians of this town after the feast, on the ground apparently that the position of the Sasun revolutionaries was becoming a danger to the

Moslems. I have very little doubt that the scheme existed, though it appears to have been discountenanced from the first by the more influential Kurds, some holding that the moment was unsuitable, and others that any such action should be avoided altogether.

The Acting Vali, in answer to my strong representations, gave me the most positive assurances that he would secure the complete maintenance of order, though he professed to disbelieve in the existence of any desire to create disturbances, and I am glad to say that, whether in consequence of any action taken by Moussa Kiazim Pasha or of the attitude of the Kurdish Chiefs, the last five days have passed quietly.

The Armenians, who were very anxious, and avoided the bazaars as much as possible early in the week, are now regaining confidence, and resuming the regular conduct of their business, but the impression prevails that a serious crisis has been passed, and that at one time the danger of an outbreak was imminent.

The Governor, who only arrived at Sairt a few months ago from Nejd, has never been in these parts before; he has consequently but little local experience, and was perhaps sincere in his disbelief in the danger which I indicated to him.

On the night of the 1st instant a telegram was received from Constantinople, containing the most stringent orders to take every precaution against disturbance, and I think it probable that, apart from the possible consequences of hostilities in Sasun, no trouble need arise here if the Kurdish Chiefs and local authorities understand that the Central Government is really determined to maintain order.

I was unable to obtain any information from the Governor as to the state of Kulp. He seemed to admit, though very reluctantly, that order had been in some way threatened, but insisted that nothing serious had happened, and that he was in no apprehension of trouble there. Any steps that the military authorities might take he professed to regard as mere measures of precaution.

With respect to the condition of Moush, too, he continues to assert that all is well, but I cannot say whether these optimistic statements are well founded.

The accounts that reach me from Armenian sources are disquieting. Fear is general, and the bazaars are practically deserted; but I understand that nothing of importance has actually occurred as yet.

It appears that the town of Moush is well patrolled, and that, even by the admission of those who assert that the Armenian quarter is practically blockaded, the soldiers have so far been behaving well.

Salih Pasha has quite recently been promoted General of Division, and, as I understand, confirmed in the command that he has hitherto held as Acting Ferik.

Ferid Bey, the new Vali, left Aleppo on the 1st instant, and may be expected here in about a fortnight.

No. 26.

Sir N. O'Conor to the Marquess of Lansdowne.—(Received April 5.)

(Telegraphic.) *Constantinople, April 5, 1904.*

I LEARN that the mediation of the Armenian Bishops is rejected by the revolutionaries on the ground that the guarantee for the fulfilment of the Sultan's promises of amnesty is insufficient. If, however, the promises are made through the foreign Consuls, they profess to be ready to lay down their arms, and I hear a report that overtures have been made by them to the Russian Consul at Erzeroum in this sense.

With reference to my despatch of the 12th March, I should be grateful if your Lordship would furnish me with instructions in regard to the proposal contained therein.

No. 27.

The Marquess of Lansdowne to Sir N. O'Conor.

(Telegraphic.) *Foreign Office, April 6, 1904.*

SIR, I HAVE consulted the French and Russian Ambassadors on the proposal contained in your despatch of the 12th March.

The French Government are ready to agree, and will send the necessary instructions to their Consuls on learning that His Majesty's Government have done likewise.

Count Benckendorff has referred to St. Petersburgh for instructions.

Your French and Russian colleagues may therefore now be consulted on the subject.

No. 28.

The Marquess of Lansdowne to Sir N. O'Conor.

(Telegraphic.) *Foreign Office, April* 12, 1904.

I AM informed by Count Benckendorff that, with a view to joint action at Moush and Sasun by the Consuls of France, Russia, and England, instructions have been sent to the Russian Ambassador at Constantinople to confer with you and the French Ambassador on the subject.

No. 29.

The Marquess of Lansdowne to Sir C. Scott.

Sir, *Foreign Office, April* 19, 1904.

THE Russian Ambassador called upon me to-day, and told me that instructions had been given to the Russian Ambassador at Constantinople to co-operate with his French and British colleagues in an endeavour to establish better relations in the neighbourhood of Sasun and Moush. The Russian Government, however, learned that a very large Turkish force was being maintained in that part of Armenia. It was believed to number about 38,000 men, a strength which seemed to the Russian Government altogether excessive, and likely to lead to serious trouble, and perhaps to a general massacre of Armenians. The Russian Ambassador at Constantinople had called the attention of the Porte to this matter, and his Excellency expressed a hope that Sir Nicholas O'Conor would be instructed to do the same. I promised that I would make inquiries as to the facts.

I am, &c.
(Signed) LANSDOWNE.

No. 30.

The Marquess of Lansdowne to Sir N. O'Conor.

(Telegraphic.) *Foreign Office, April* 23, 1904.

I WAS again informed by Count Benckendorff on the 19th instant that instructions had been sent to your Russian colleague to co-operate for improving the situation at Sasun and Moush with the French Ambassador and yourself.

The Russian Government had heard, he said, that a force of 38,000 had been concentrated in those districts by the Turks. This number seemed to be excessive and might lead to trouble, and as representations had already been made on the subject by the Russian Ambassador, he hoped that you would do likewise. I promised his Excellency that I would inquire as to the facts of the case.

What information have you as to the number of troops now in these districts, and how far have they been augmented?

The Turkish forces, according to our information, do not exceed 6,000 Regulars, which number might be increased by drawing 2,000 more from Kharput. But there has been a talk of forming an additional force of Hamidieh cavalry, and 7,000 militia have been called out.

No. 31.

Sir N. O'Conor to the Marquess of Lansdowne.—(*Received April* 25.)

(Telegraphic.) *Constantinople, April* 25, 1904.

ARMENIAN disturbances.

Our latest information is to the effect that the Ottoman Government has called out eight battalions of Redifs to replace the seven battalions sent against the insurgents of Sasun; the total number of troops amounting to 12,000 men. The mobilization of Hamidieh cavalry is denied here, and we have no confirmation of it.

The Grand Vizier told me that the sole and only object of this military activity was to restrain the Kurds from the raiding he had reason to apprehend, and to cope with the insurgents.

No. 32.

Sir N. O'Conor to the Marquess of Lansdowne.—(*Received April* 28.)

My Lord, *Constantinople, April* 20, 1904.

I HAVE the honour to forward to your Lordship herewith copy of a despatch from His Majesty's Vice-Consul at Bitlis, respecting the views of the new Vali of Bitlis on the situation in that province.

I have, &c.

(Signed) N. R. O'CONOR.

Inclosure in No. 32.

Vice-Consul Heathcote to Sir N. O'Conor

Sir, *Bitlis, April* 2, 1904.

I HAVE the honour to report that the new Vali of Bitlis arrived on the 17th ultimo, having travelled by Alexandretta and Diarbekir. The general impression created by Ferid Bey has been good.

I have had one long interview with him, and although it is too early for me to form any estimate as to his character, I venture to submit the following remarks on our conversation:—

His Excellency's attitude towards me was extremely cordial, and he seemed anxious to hear my opinions on the situation and the needs of the province, practically admitting that he had as yet very little information as to the true state of affairs.

I urged him to take any steps in his power to induce the agricultural population to sow their fields in good time, pointing out that owing to the insecurity of the country and to the general apprehension as to what may occur in Sasun the usual autumn sowing had been largely neglected, and that unless the Armenian cultivators had some assurance that they would be allowed to profit by their labour and relieved from their present fear of spoliation, they were likely to leave their fields unsown in the spring also, with the result that the whole province would be threatened with famine, and moreover would produce but a very small sum in taxation.

The Governor seemed to appreciate the importance of this matter and assured me that he would endeavour to improve the existing conditions of administration and justice, with special regard to the treatment of the villagers by gendarmes, so that the people might be encouraged to carry on their field work as usual; in this connection he asked me with some insistence whether, in my opinion, such an improvement would have the desired result, or whether the Armenian population were looking beyond justice and administration to a change in the political condition of the country. He seemed at first somewhat surprised at my conviction that if a reasonable degree of justice were assured the committees and insurgents would find but little support, but I think he was more disposed to agree with me when I pointed out that we were speaking of a rude and ignorant peasantry such as in all countries thinks first of its crops and cattle.

With regard to Sasun, his Excellency seemed more anxious to hear my opinion than to express his own. The only point as to which he declared himself convinced

was that the numbers of the revolutionaries have been much exaggerated, and that there can be but little over 200 come from abroad to the mountains. He pressed me to say whether I thought the Government should take action against them or not, to which I replied that if he could be quite certain that his soldiers and officers, subaltern as well as superior, would not exceed their instructions and would not involve the innocent with the guilty, the removal of the cause of so much uncertainty would be a clear gain; but if he could not absolutely insure the fulfilment of this condition, in that case I should say that no action should be taken unless the insurgents rendered it inevitable, for the commission of excesses by the troops would be merely playing into the hands of the insurgents.

I mentioned the statement made to your Excellency by the Grand Vizier that the Sasun revolutionaries had taken forcible possession of some twenty-five Mussulman villages of the plain, in order to show the Vali what exaggerated accounts had been sent to Constantinople before his arrival, and I hope he may correct this in his reports. I am unable to say on what basis of fact the story rests, but am confident that it is not true in the form in which it reached the Grand Vizier. The revolutionaries have been exacting supplies and moneys from Armenians of the plains, and may perhaps have treated some Moslems in the same way, though this seems improbable; or the villages meant may be some of those in the mountains, but the story must have been invented or much distorted in the interest of those who desire either disturbances or military movements which would not otherwise be sanctioned by the Central Government.

In some Armenian quarters it is feared that, owing to the supplies of the insurgents having been restricted by the number of soldiers now quartered in and near Moush, they will be obliged to take the initiative shortly, before their situation becomes intolerable.

Those of the Redifs who were called out on the 6th March have now been dismissed. It is rumoured that they were summoned on account of alarmist telegrams sent by Salih Pasha to Constantinople, and that they have been disbanded because their Commandant, Said Bey, temporarily at the head of the garrison here, reported that he had no need of them.

I have, &c.
(Signed) W. J. HEATHCOTE.

No. 33.

Sir N. O'Conor to the Marquess of Lansdowne.—(*Received April* 28.)

My Lord, *Constantinople, April* 18, 1904.

WITH reference to previous correspondence respecting the condition of affairs in the Sasun district, I have the honour to report the following information, which has reached me through the Porte:—

The Officer Commanding at Kulp telegraphed on the 14th instant that the number of revolutionaries operating from Talori, which a month ago was only 200, had been increased to between 300 and 400. Of these, however, barely 100, according to his estimate, were men trained to the use of arms and properly equipped. The remainder were peasants, whose natural inclination was to live at peace, but who had been induced by importunity, threats, or actual force to join the bands. These men had amongst them only seventeen Russian Mausers, with less than a hundred rounds apiece, the majority being armed with old rifles procured from the Kurds, and including a proportion of Winchesters and Martinis. Against these he had under his command two Nizam battalions fully armed and equipped, and numbering 500 men, which he considered more than sufficient to protect his district from the Talori bands. With a view to preventing the latter from proceeding to fresh acts of aggression, which they might be encouraged to do were he to remain inactive awaiting instructions from head-quarters, he proposed to move out to Ardonk, Kuznak, and Akchasher, after which he would be able to report further on the ulterior measures to be taken as regards Talori. Subsequently, however, he appears to have been informed that the revolutionaries had burned the village of Ardonk also. According to information received by the Porte from another source, they also attacked a mixed village named Latchkan, situated about five hours west of Moush, in the Sandjak of Genj, where they are said to have killed thirty Mussulmans. The Mutessarif of Genj reports

that the people of Latchkan are appealing to the surrounding villages for help, and that the excitement is consequently assuming increasing proportions. The troops in Kulp being required to operate from that side against the Talori bands, he recommends that a battalion from Moush should be sent to Latchkan to keep the population in hand and prevent the disturbance from extending over a wider area.

The Vali of Bitlis also reported on the 14th instant that he had dispatched a company of "Seyyare" gendarmerie to Kulp, and had reiterated his instructions to the Mutessarif to take all possible precautions to prevent the population becoming involved in the disorders.

He also stated that orders had been given for the arrest and prosecution of four Kurds of Bozikian and three of Khizvank, who were suspected of selling bullets to the revolutionaries, over 80 lbs. weight having been found in one house.

On the 16th instant the Armenian Patriarch received a message from the Palace, informing him of the reports respecting the incident of Latchkan, and inviting him to exert his influence towards the maintenance of tranquillity, and, telegraphing under the same date, Mr. Heathcote reports that the Vali had left for Moush, accompanied by the Public Prosecutor and Examining Magistrate and two members of the Episcopal Council, and that he desired the Bishop to accompany him, but that the Bishop declined to do so without the previous authorization of the Patriarch.

We shall know shortly whether the mediation of the Armenian Ecclesiastics is likely to be successful. If it fails, the occasion will be offered for the intervention of the Consuls. I have spoken to my Russian and French colleagues, who have both received instructions to confer with me on the subject. A difficulty, however, which I have foreseen for some time, arose as to whether the Russian Government will allow such of the insurgents as have come from Russia to return, and M. Zinovieff said he must consult his Government on this point before giving an answer.

I have, &c.
(Signed) N. R. O'CONOR.

No. 34.

Sir N. O'Conor to the Marquess of Lansdowne.—(*Received April* 29.)

(Telegraphic.) *Constantinople, April* 29, 1904.

ARMENIAN disturbances.

My Russian colleague informs me that he saw the Grand Vizier this morning, and that his Highness told him the insurgents had refused the mediation of the Bishops. According to a telegram from Consul at Erzeroum, they are reported to have burnt twenty-five houses and killed thirty Kurds at Latchkan. His Highness said the insurgents numbered about 2,000.

I hear from Vice-Consul at Bitlis that there has been severe fighting between the Kurds and insurgents, in which the former lost twenty-five. It is said that some twelve villages have been burnt, but it is not clear by which party.

At present Consular mediation seems hopeless in face of defiant attitude of insurgents, but in any case the Russian Consul at Bitlis only left Constantinople to-day on his return to his post.

On Monday the Grand Vizier gave me the most positive assurances that everything possible was being done by the Imperial Government to keep the Kurds in hand. I am making the most earnest representations, in concert with the Russian and French Ambassadors, with a view to preventing any massacre. As there are some fourteen battalions round Moush, the Turkish Government should be able to do so.

No. 35.

The Marquess of Lansdowne to Sir N. O'Conor.

(Telegraphic.) *Foreign Office, April* 30, 1904.

ARMENIA. I approve your representations as reported in your telegram of yesterday.

The worst possible impression will be created if the Turkish authorities fail to keep the Kurds in order.

The presence of a large Turkish force in Armenia could only be justified upon the assumption that it was necessary to prevent disorders and excesses, and exception has been taken to it.

No. 36.

Sir N. O'Conor to the Marquess of Lansdowne.—(*Received May* 2.)

(Extract.) *Constantinople, April* 26, 1904.

WITH reference to my despatch of the 18th instant respecting mediation between the Sasun revolutionaries and the Turkish Government, I have the honour to transmit herewith extract of a despatch from His Majesty's Vice-Consul at Bitlis on this subject.

Inclosure in No. 36.

Vice-Consul Heathcote to Sir N. O'Conor.

(Extract.) *Bitlis, April* 9, 1904

I HAVE the honour to submit the opinion that such informal negotiations as have been ordered by His Majesty the Sultan are unlikely, in view of the few indications I have heard of the temper of the Sasun insurgents, to produce much result.

In the first place, the refusal of the Imperial Government to give the proceedings an official character, in accordance with the Patriarch's request that an officer should accompany his agents, will tend to throw doubt on his Beatitude's assertions that he is acting on behalf of His Majesty.

If the numbers of the declared insurgents are really as low as the estimates of the Sultan and the Vali, and if there is any foundation for the belief mentioned in my despatch of the 2nd April that their supplies are restricted by the number of troops now quartered in and near Moush, it is possible that they might welcome any proposals that offered them a way of escape with any certainty of personal immunity, but, in my humble opinion, it will be difficult to give effective guarantees for this condition.

According to the reports accepted by His Majesty, seven-eighths of the force are Ottoman subjects, and therefore cannot be escorted under safe conduct to the frontier, and no amnesty can secure them against arrest and molestation if they return to their homes. Arrears of taxes would be a sufficient pretext, and the local authorities would have ingenuity enough to find others if that were to fail.

If, on the other hand, the insurgents are, or think themselves, strong enough to make any effective resistance now or later to the troops, they would probably refuse any terms that the Government could at present offer; if such a refusal were not at once followed by an attack in overwhelming force, the overtures would be ascribed to fear, and this belief would add not merely to the confidence but also to the numbers of the insurgents.

Unfortunately I have no means of ascertaining the real intentions of the effective force of the revolutionaries. As to the former, it is generally believed that they have abandoned all hope of securing reforms except through European, and preferably British, intervention. If this is so, though they may not desire to provoke hostilities, they would wish to keep the question open as long as possible, and would be likely to reject the mere offer of personal safety, even if they could regard it as secure, unless it were the only alternative to immediate annihilation.

With regard to their numbers, no one here except the Vali, who now declares himself in agreement with the Central Government, estimates them at less than 700 or 800 armed men, besides those among the villagers who are ready to join a successful rising.

It is impossible, however, to believe that the Grand Vizier can be really and finally convinced of the accuracy of the official estimate, or he would not have amassed a force of 10,000 men or more for the contingency of operations against 400. The Vali professes to regard my estimate of the troops collected as greatly exaggerated, but the

garrison of the Moush Sandjak last summer was six battalions; Mr. Shipley informs me that four more have been sent from Erzeroum and Erzinjan, and I am told that a battalion quite recently went from Sairt to the southern border of the disturbed district —this, however, the Vali denies—and another from Kharput, and that one battalion from Van crossed the lake last week and proceeded westwards.

No. 37.

Sir N. O'Conor to the Marquess of Lansdowne.—(Received May 2.)

My Lord, *Constantinople, April 25, 1904.*

ON receipt of your Lordship's telegram of the 23rd instant, I thought it well to check the information we had received from the Consuls in Armenia by consulting the Grand Vizier in regard to the number of troops recently called out in consequence of the insurrectionary outbreak in the Sasun district.

His Highness' reports confirmed those from Bitlis and elsewhere, and gave the number of battalions as fifteen, actually under arms, and four more ordered to be ready for mobilization in case of need.

The Russian Ambassador, who had made fresh representations to Tewfik Pasha earlier in the morning, spoke to me on the subject. His Excellency's information, derived from other sources, evidently did not support the reports of the Russian Consul at Erzeroum, and he seemed to think that fifteen to eighteen battalions were probably the utmost concentrated in those parts.

The Grand Vizier said that he could not understand the anxiety shown by the Russian Ambassador, who must be fully informed in regard to the insurrection, as many of the revolutionists had come from Russia across the frontier. It was difficult to say their precise number, but he was inclined to put the total of insurgents in the Sasun district at about 1,000.

A military force of five battalions surrounded the insurgents, and every precaution had been taken and the strictest orders sent to the Valis to prevent the Kurds from approaching the disturbed districts, as he was afraid of the outrages they might commit.

The Bishop of Bitlis had left on the 20th instant to join his Moush colleague and several members of the Council, as also the Procureur-General and other civil functionaries. He could not say what result would attend the mediation of the Bishops, though he was afraid the insurgents would refuse to surrender. Should this prove to be the case he wished to know what course I suggested.

I said that I thought it not improbable the overtures of the Bishops would be rejected, as I heard the insurgent Chief Andronik had stated that he could not rely upon the Imperial Government respecting the promises made by the Bishops, particularly as the Government was reported to have refused to send at the same time a properly accredited Representative of the Sultan, invested with full powers to treat and to guarantee their safety.

In this case I thought the Consuls of Great Britain, Russia, and France might with advantage be called upon to mediate, it being clearly understood, of course, that the assurances given by them to the insurgents would be fully respected by the Imperial Government. It was, however, premature to discuss this suggestion until we knew exactly the result of the present efforts at mediation. There would probably be some difficulty in knowing where to send the insurgents, even if they laid down their arms. Those who had crossed the Persian frontier could possibly be easily expelled, but if any considerable number had come from Russia, I doubted whether the Governor of the Caucasus would be willing to allow them to return.

Previous to my seeing the Grand Vizier, the Russian Ambassador had told me he had had no answer from his Government as to whether they would permit those insurgents who were Russian subjects to return, but that he thought it would depend in great measure on their number. The Governor-General of the Caucasus was opposed to it on the ground that the number was very great, but he was endeavouring to disabuse his mind of this idea. His Excellency added that the newly-appointed Russian Consul to Bitlis had been detained here longer than he expected, but that he was leaving to-morrow and would proceed viâ Tiflis, so that he ought to be at Bitlis within twelve or fourteen days.

The French Chargé d'Affaires informed me that the French Consul at Van had

received instructions from his Government to co-operate with his British and Russian colleagues of Bitlis in case of mediation, and that he would be prepared to do so at any moment, if events shaped themselves this way.

I have, &c.
(Signed) N. R. O'CONOR.

No. 38.

Sir N. O'Conor to the Marquess of Lansdowne.—(Received May 9.)

My Lord, *Constantinople, May 3, 1904.*

I CALLED upon the Grand Vizier again yesterday in order to impress upon him the importance of not leaving the local authorities in doubt as to the severe punishment that would be inflicted upon any military or civil officials who failed to take prompt and effective measures to prevent excesses on the part of the Kurds of Armenia, and to inform his Highness that your Lordship had hastened to let me know that any failure to keep these turbulent tribes in order would create the worst possible impression.

His Highness replied by once more assuring me that the most stringent orders to this effect had already been issued, and the military authorities had instructions not to allow the Kurds to approach anywhere near the seat of hostilities.

The Grand Vizier then showed me a report stating that several bands of insurgents, said to number between 3,000 and 4,000, were reported to be assembling in the neighbourhood of Van and in the Caza of Passin, as also at Kaghizman and the Soghanli Dagh.

I have, &c.
(Signed) N. R. O'CONOR.

No. 39.

Sir N. O'Conor to the Marquess of Lansdowne.—(Received May 16.)

My Lord, *Constantinople, May 5, 1904.*

I HAVE the honour to transmit to your Lordship herewith extract of an interesting Report which I have received from His Majesty's Vice-Consul at Van, describing the precarious situation at present existing in that vilayet.

I have, &c.
(Signed) N. R. O'CONOR.

Inclosure in No. 39.

Vice-Consul Tyrrell to Sir N. O'Conor.

(Extract.) *Van, April 11, 1904.*

I HAVE the honour to submit my report of affairs in the vilayet during the past quarter.

As is usual at this time of year, the air has been full of rumours as to what is going to happen in the spring; and there has been a general feeling of anxiety and apprehension among the Christians. There are circumstances this year which make a pessimistic forecast more justifiable than usual, and if one did not know that this alarm recurs annually as the winter is drawing to its close, the outlook would appear grave.

There is the attitude of the Mussulman population, whose feeling of suspicion towards their Christian fellow-subjects, only dormant at the best of times, has been fed upon distorted accounts of what has been happening in Macedonia during the past year. This feeling is increased by reports of the intention of Armenian revolutionists to make a diversion here in favour of the Macedonian ones.

Revolutionists are said to be continually arriving in Van, disguised as Kurds; and the Kurds are quite ready to help them to do so, allowing them to pass over the frontier, and assisting them on their way, for adequate payment.

There can be no doubt, I think, that a certain number of revolutionists (from Russia chiefly) have succeeded in getting into Sasun during the past autumn and winter. The steady concentration of Turkish troops about Moush is not for nothing. Still, it is very difficult to get authentic news from there, and it seems to me that the chief basis of the reports current here of what is going on in Moush and Sasun is that no news is allowed to come from those places, and that the Armenians here who have friends and relations there can get no news from them. A report emanating from Bitlis arrived here in the end of February that there was a massacre in progress in Moush Plain; but it afterwards transpired that it was only "fear of a massacre" which they had intended to convey. "Fear of massacre" may be said to be perennial among the Armenians here, unfortunately, and by itself means very little.

The expression given to their feelings of dislike and suspicion by the Mussulmans, soldiers as well as civilians, has been alluded to by me on former occasions, and is one of the causes of there being more apprehension than usual this year. The Kurds, also, are said to be hopeful of receiving such orders this year as may enable them to repeat their doings in 1895–1896, or, at any rate, of being allowed to plunder the Armenian villages without interference. Instances have been brought to my notice of threats to this effect uttered by Kurds in the outlying districts. An American missionary who has been spending the winter between Jezire and Mosul, and in the southern fringe of Bohtan, reports that the Kurds there are very uncontrolled, and that their words and behaviour have led the Christians to fully expect an impending disaster. These Christians are mostly Nestorians, and their hope seems to be that, when the Armenian revolutionists have succeeded in bringing on a massacre, it should be confined to Armenians, and that the Turkish Government should be constrained to protect the Nestorians and to force the Kurds to differentiate between them and Armenians.

The orders received here to call out the Redif, which I reported early in March, and the contemplated formation of a new division (the 20th), to have its head-quarters at Moush, are also contributing causes to the general anxiety, there being no very apparent necessity for these steps. Thus everyone is free to draw his own conclusions, and to put the worst construction on the facts.

My opinion of the present situation here is that there is no reason to apprehend any untoward events, and that things may well go on for another year, as they have done in the past.

Still, I realize that a second factor has now to be reckoned with (the first being the chance that discontented Armenians may do something foolish which we always have); this being the readiness of the Mussulmans to take action on very slight provocation, or merely on suspicion. Anything might happen, but I can see no reason why it should, nor do I see anything to substantiate the pessimistic views of some of the inhabitants. And I have reason to believe that the revolutionists and their friends have given up all ideas of making a disturbance this year—if they ever had such an idea. Such an intention was attributed to them, and it was believed by Turks and Armenians alike that they were determined to attract the attention of Europe this year.

Still, the outlook of the year is not encouraging. Taxes continue to press heavily, and to be collected with unwonted energy. This winter has been exceptional, in that tax-collecting operations have not been suspended, as is usual, during the winter months, and there seems to be no hope that they will not continue during the rest of the year. The peasants, having no ready money with which to meet the peremptory demands of the tehsildars, have been borrowing, receiving 1 lira (18*s.* 3*d.*) for a promise of 18 chaps* of wheat after the next harvest, whereas the current price of wheat is about 3½ chaps to the lira.

No. 40.

Sir N. O'Conor to the Marquess of Lansdowne.—(*Received May* 16.)

My Lord, *Constantinople, May* 9, 1904.

I HAVE the honour to report to your Lordship that the Grand Vizier informed me to-day, with reference to the condition of affairs in Armenia, that the Imperial troops, advancing into Sasun, found the insurgents to the number of 1,500 in a fortified position at Geliguzan, whom they dislodged after a severe combat, in which they lost over

* A "chap" = about 2¼ bushels.

thirty men killed and wounded, the losses of the insurgents being unknown. An insurgent flag, a considerable quantity of ammunition, a cypher, and important correspondence were subsequently seized.

His Highness assured me most positively that no Kurds or irregulars of any sort took part in these proceedings, and that a *procès-verbal* of all that occurred had been drawn up on the spot by the civil functionaries accompanying the troops. He thought it not improbable that the insurgents would not be able to hold out very long, and that they would ask for an amnesty and pardon, which would be granted to them. The precise number of insurgents who had crossed the Russian frontier was not known, but his Highness did not believe it was considerable.

I have, &c.
(Signed) N. R. O'CONOR.

No. 41.

Sir N. O'Conor to the Marquess of Lansdowne.—(Received May 16.)

My Lord, *Constantinople, May* 10, 1904.

I HAVE the honour to forward to your Lordship herewith copy of a despatch from His Majesty's Vice-Consul at Bitlis, reporting rumours of recent fighting between Armenian insurgents and Turkish troops or Kurds in the neighbourhood of Sasun.

I have, &c.
(Signed) N. R. O'CONOR.

Inclosure in No. 41.

Vice-Consul Heathcote to Sir N. O'Conor.

Sir, *Bitlis, April* 23, 1904.

I HAVE the honour to report that rumours have reached Bitlis of a conflict between Armenian revolutionaries and Turkish troops or Kurds. I understand that some of the former have sent a letter to sympathizers here declaring that a fight had occurred in a Kurdish village in the neighbourhood of Sasun, and that the Kurds when driven out of the village with a loss of twenty or thirty men had brought the corpses to Moush, where great excitement prevailed in consequence.

At about the same time some influential Moslems of Bitlis heard that there had been fighting near Hazo to the south of Sasun, in which the Turkish troops had lost fifteen or twenty men.

I am unable at present to say positively whether these two stories refer to the same incident, or whether either of them are true, but am inclined to regard the insurgent version as a corruption of that given by the Moslems, which would appear to have some foundation in fact.

I have, &c.
(Signed) W. J. HEATHCOTE.

P.S.—A muleteer just arrived from Moush confirms the former of the foregoing rumours, and says that he left the town hastily because the military authorities were requisitioning pack animals to be sent with soldiers to Sasun.

W. J. H.

No. 42.

Sir N. O'Conor to the Marquess of Lansdowne.—(Received May 16.)

My Lord, *Constantinople, May* 10, 1904.

I HAVE the honour to forward to your Lordship herewith copy of a despatch from His Majesty's Acting Vice-Consul at Diarbekir, reporting an attack by the

Armenians of Shenik, in the Sasun district, on the Latchkan Kurds of the Badikan tribe.

I have, &c.
(Signed) N. R. O'CONOR.

Inclosure in No. 42.

Acting Vice-Consul Young to Sir N. O'Conor.

Sir, *Diarbekir, April* 26, 1904.

I HAVE the honour to report to your Excellency that on the 8th April the Armenians of Shenik, in the Sasun district, attacked the Latchkan Kurds of the Badikan tribe.

Twenty-two of the latter were killed and eighteen wounded. Among the Armenians there were five casualties.

On the 20th instant Sevedin Pasha and Haji Reshid Agha, Kurd Chiefs, telegraphed to his Excellency the Vali from Farkin, offering to assist the Badikan Kurds in punishing the Armenians.

The offer was, however, peremptorily declined.

I have, &c.
(Signed) H. WILKIE YOUNG.

No. 43.

Sir N. O'Conor to the Marquess of Lansdowne.—(Received May 16.)

My Lord, *Constantinople, May* 11, 1904.

IN the course of a conversation I had yesterday with the Russian Ambassador upon the subject of the threatened disturbances in the neighbourhood of Moush, his Excellency informed me that he had instructed the Russian Consul, who is now on his way to Bitlis, viâ Tiflis, to concert with His Majesty's Consul at the former place and proceed to Moush in the hope that the presence of the foreign Consuls at that place might assist in calming the existing agitation.

I told M. Zinoview that I was glad to hear that he had taken this action and that I would instruct Mr. Heathcote to proceed to Moush. I subsequently saw the French Ambassador and suggested to him that a French Consular officer in the neighbourhood should be instructed to go to Moush also. M. Constans promised to consider the matter, and said that he would probably send the Consul from Van to join and concert with the other Consuls at Moush.

I telegraphed to Mr. Heathcote last night the substance of the above and told him that should the Russian Consul on his arrival at Bitlis not proceed to Moush he should communicate with me and ask for further instructions before himself proceeding to that place.

I have, &c.
(Signed) N. R. O'CONOR.

No. 44.

Sir N. O'Conor to the Marquess of Lansdowne.—(Received May 16.)

My Lord, *Constantinople, May* 12, 1904.

I HAVE the honour to inform your Lordship that I addressed the following telegram to-day to His Majesty's Vice-Consul at Bitlis :—

"The French Consul at Van has been instructed by the Ambassador here to leave at once for Moush, and to confer with the Russian Consul and yourself as to the chances of mediation proving effective. Please, therefore, proceed there immediately.

"I subjoin, for your information and guidance, an account of procedure at Zeitoun in 1896 on occasion of Consular mediation there.

"The Consuls proceeded with a sufficient escort near the insurgent camp, summoned the Chiefs, and informed them of the terms of surrender offered by the Turks. These

were accepted, with slight modifications, whereupon the Consular cavasses escorted the leaders to the sea, where the latter embarked for European soil.

"Terms were as follows :—

"Guarantees for preservation of lives of Christians, and disarming of Moslem neighbours ; surrender of military weapons ; amnesty ; remission of some years of land tax, &c."

I have, &c.
(Signed) N. R. O'CONOR.

No. 45.

Sir N. O'Conor to the Marquess of Lansdowne.—(*Received May* 17.)

(Telegraphic.) *Constantinople, May* 16, 1904.

MR. HEATHCOTE arrived at Moush from Bitlis last night; the French Consul has also arrived there. Considerable excitement prevails.

Refugees, to the number of a thousand, are in great distress and are sheltering in Moush. Their villages are said by the Grand Vizier to have been burnt by the insurgents before the arrival of the troops. The Turkish authorities have remitted pecuniary relief.

No. 46.

Sir N. O'Conor to the Marquess of Lansdowne.—(*Received May* 19.)

(Telegraphic.) *Constantinople, May* 19, 1904.

MR. HEATHCOTE reports failure of mediation of Bishops, and states that Talori, Semal, and Shenik, which the insurgents had occupied, have been captured and burnt by troops, who have also destroyed several other villages.

No. 47.

The Marquess of Lansdowne to Sir N. O'Conor.

Sir, *Foreign Office, May* 20, 1904.

I HAVE received your Excellency's despatch of the 11th instant relative to the threatened disturbances in the neighbourhood of Moush, and the proposed dispatch of the British, French, and Russian Consuls, in order to calm the agitation among the Armenians in that district.

I approve the action taken by you in the matter.

I am, &c.
(Signed) LANSDOWNE.

No. 48.

Sir N. O'Conor to the Marquess of Lansdowne.—(*Received May* 23.)

My Lord, *Constantinople, May* 16, 1904.

I HAVE the honour to forward to your Lordship herewith a copy of a despatch from His Majesty's Consul at Erzeroum, reporting on the concentration of Turkish troops at Moush.

I have, &c.
(Signed) N. R. O'CONOR.

Inclosure in No. 48.

Mr. Shipley to Sir N. O'Conor.

(Extract.) *Erzeroum, May* 7, 1904.

I HAVE the honour to confirm my telegram of yesterday. I was informed by a General Officer that twenty-five battalions had been put on a 'war footing, *i.e.*, 900 men strong, to be held in readiness to proceed to Moush at the shortest notice. The same officer assured me with the most solemn protestations that the number of battalions at Moush did not exceed nine, but that they each contained 900 men, whence, he supposes, the prevalent mistaken opinion that there are fourteen.

Twenty-five men of the field telegraph service left here yesterday for Moush, and one regiment of cavalry will leave Hassan-Kale shortly for the same destination.

A number of mountain guns, six probably, from the local batteries are destined to "replace" the field guns at Bayezid. I do not know whether these latter will be brought in here or not.

No. 49.

Sir N. O'Conor to the Marquess of Lansdowne.—(Received May 23.)

My Lord, *Constantinople, May* 16, 1904.

I HAVE the honour to transmit to your Lordship an extract from a despatch which I have received from His Majesty's Vice-Consul at Bitlis, reporting upon recent events in the Moush district.

Your Lordship will perceive from a perusal of this despatch that Mr. Heathcote is of opinion that the main object of the insurgents is to provoke foreign intervention, either by prolonging the present state of political uncertainty, or by provoking the Moslems to a massacre of innocent Armenians. He further expresses a belief that the insurgents will refuse mediation or any terms offered by the foreign Consuls which would not pledge their Governments to a considerable measure of intervention in the administration of the Armenian provinces, unless under stress of urgent military success, and after they have lost all hope of successful action in resisting the Turkish forces.

I spoke to the Grand Vizier on Monday, the 9th instant, in regard to the villages said to have been burnt by the Kurds, to which allusion is made in the latter part of Mr. Heathcote's despatch, and I have now given him a list of the villages. His Highness, on the occasion of my visit, promised that he would cause immediate inquiry to be made into the circumstances of the report.

I have, &c.
(Signed) N. R. O'CONOR.

Inclosure in No. 49.

Vice-Consul Heathcote to Sir N. O'Conor.

(Extract.) *Bitlis, April* 30, 1904.

I HAVE the honour to report that, according to information brought by various travellers from Moush, the Vali summoned the two Bishops of Moush and Bitlis, and members of their Councils, and ordered them to proceed to Sasun with a view to opening negotiations with the insurgent leaders. They replied that no action that they could take would have any effect unless his Excellency himself accompanied them, and it is stated that the insurgents themselves had made it known that they would communicate with no one but the Governor.

Ferid Bey at first insisted that they should obey his orders, fixing Monday, the 25th April, as the latest date for their departure, and it seems that they yielded, though repeating that they had no hope of success.

On Saturday, the 23rd, however, the Governor-General started from Moush for Semal, the first village in the disturbed district, separated from Moush by one mountain ridge, a journey of four hours in summer and perhaps twice as much at this season. He took with him a small escort and a few officials, including some of the judicial

officers whom he had brought from Bitlis; the Bishops, with a large body of Armenian ecclesiastical and lay Councillors, village Headmen, and others, to the number of about sixty, were to follow him two days later, together with a force of four battalions, and arrangements were made to connect Semal with Moush by telegraph.

It is asserted that Ferid Bey's attitude towards the Armenians of Moush has been far less conciliatory than that which he had adopted in Bitlis; that he charged their leading men with being in league with the insurgents, furnishing them with money and supplies, and so with being largely responsible for the present state of affairs; and that he demanded from them a written admission that the bands in the mountains were outlaws ("Eshkiya"), and another to the effect that the reports given as to the Hunan episode were false.

If this is true, his object may have been to lay on them the responsibility of negotiating with the rebels, to allay troubles which he attributed to them, without openly admitting that the Government had need of their mediation, but such language would be likely to act as an encouragement to the more lawless Kurds, and in fact much crime is reported from the plain of Moush.

When he left Bitlis the Vali seemed to have considerable hope that he would before long be able to settle the Sasun question, but his confidence is not shared by many here. Should the insurgents refuse whatever offers he may make, I venture to think that the Government can hardly avoid military action, as the rejection of terms offered on behalf of the Sovereign by an official of his rank would be an act of rebellion so open that it would be impossible to overlook it.

The action of the insurgents will probably be dictated, as I submitted in my despatch of the 9th April, by the extent of their confidence in their power to offer effective resistance—at all events for a long enough time to give them some hope of provoking foreign intervention.

As far as is known here, their chief hope is that, either by prolonging the present state of political uncertainty, or, if that fails, by provoking the Moslems to massacre innocent Armenians, they may be able, sooner or later, to induce Europe to intervene; and if they had any suspicion that the European Governments were prepared to take action at the present moment they would be likely to refuse immediately the offers made by the Sultan through his officers, in the hope that, if foreign Powers had once taken up the case, they might find themselves compelled to continue their action until some at least of the aims of the insurgents were realized.

I cannot believe that, except under the stress of urgent military necessity, they would accept any terms from foreign Consular Delegates which would not pledge their Governments to a considerable measure of intervention in the administration of the Armenian provinces; and though I admit that my information as to their hopes and plans is meagre, yet, if the beliefs of their co-religionists here, and their action in refusing to treat with the Bishops, can be taken as tests, it would not appear that they despair of the situation so completely as to be satisfied with the simple promise of a safe-conduct for the leaders and a more or less illusory amnesty for their local supporters.

Since writing the above, I have received further news from Moush, which shows that the Armenians of that town have been greatly alarmed during the last few days by the events occurring, or believed to be occurring, in the mountains. Similar rumours, but in less detail, are current here, and it is generally supposed that they refer to quite recent events, though I am inclined to think that they are repetitions of the reports mentioned in my despatch of the 23rd April.

According to these statements, over 200 Kurds of the Badikanli tribe attacked Geligenim and Gelimansour, with a loss of twenty-five men on their side and one insurgent; the two villages are said to have been burnt, as well as Kop, Germav, Shenik, and part of Semal.

It is also asserted that Kurds from Khian have burnt the following villages in the Talori district: Helink, Ardonk, Kuznak, Sevid, Mezré, and Hargo, and that there has already been great loss of life, several hundred persons having perished "on both sides." The use of this expression indicates regular fighting, but my informants evidently believe that a massacre of the villagers is in progress.

I am quite unable as yet to judge how much truth there may be in these statements. The Bitlis authorities profess to have no authentic information, but to have received credible rumours of tribal disputes among Kurds near Hazo.

It seems unlikely that the insurgents, who, as I hear, have accepted the idea of a conference provided the Vali came in person, should have chosen this time to attack the Kurds, and the probability is that the latter were the aggressors, as stated by

my informants; it is even possible that they assumed the offensive in order to render any settlement unattainable.

If the attack was in fact made by Kurds, the Vali could, in my humble opinion, do far more to demonstrate the good faith of himself and the Government, and so to promote the cause of peace, by the prompt punishment of the assailants than by any conferences with the rebel leaders, for any such clear proof that the new Governor was prepared to introduce some measure of justice would deprive the insurgents of much of the support which they find among the Armenian population.

No. 50.

Sir N. O'Conor to the Marquess of Lansdowne.—(Received May 23.)

My Lord, *Constantinople, May 18, 1904.*

SINCE the arrival of Mr. Heathcote at Moush on the 15th instant, the only news I have received from him is that contained in my telegram of the 16th instant, with the additional fact that he reported that the Turkish troops were believed to be near Talori.

I received a visit yesterday from Youssouf Bey, who came in the name of the Minister for Foreign Affairs, to tell me that a report had reached the Palace to the effect that I proposed to send the British Consul to Talori, and to express the hope of the Sultan that I would not take such a step, as to do so would only serve to encourage the insurgents to resistance and prolong the existing troubles.

I replied that I had no intention for the moment of sending Mr. Heathcote to Talori, but that I could not undertake not to do so should it be shown in the reports which would reach me in due course that outrages were being committed there, or that the inhabitants were suffering from the excesses either of the troops or of the Kurds.

When I saw the Grand Vizier on the 16th instant, I mentioned the report that I had received from Mr. Heathcote of the presence at Moush of about 1,000 refugees, and I asked his Highness what information he possessed on the subject. He replied that it was quite true that there were 1,000 refugees at Moush, and that the Turkish Government had sent them pecuniary assistance amounting to about 60,000 piastres (600*l.*). When I pressed him as to whence the refugees had come, he answered that they had fled from the neighbouring villages which had been destroyed by the insurgents before the arrival of the Turkish troops.

This statement of the Grand Vizier seemed to me highly unsatisfactory, as granted that the insurgent bands who have crossed the frontier are capable of committing the grossest excesses, it is evident that the damage done must have been committed by a larger force than that of some 200 men who are believed to have come either from Russia or from Persia. If, again, this force had been increased by local revolutionaries, it is hardly credible that these men would have turned against their own kith and kin, burned their own villages, and forced the women and children to seek the protection of Turkish officials at Moush.

I have, &c.
(Signed) N. R. O'CONOR.

No. 51.

Sir N. O'Conor to the Marquess of Lansdowne.—(Received May 30.)

My Lord, *Constantinople, May 24, 1904.*

I HAVE the honour to report that, when calling upon the Grand Vizier on Monday, his Highness read to me several telegrams respecting the condition of affairs in Sasun which he had received from the Vali of Bitlis, of which a summary was subsequently made by Mr. Lamb, and is inclosed herewith.

According to these reports, twelve villages have been burnt or destroyed in the Sandjak of Moush, and thirteen in the Sandjak of Genj; of these, twelve are purely Armenian, and in the other thirteen the vast majority of the inhabitants are of the same race and creed.

The Grand Vizier asserts that neither Kurds nor Bashi-Bozouks participated in the conflict, and that, except in the case of a few villages strongly occupied by the insurgents,

the destruction was caused by the insurgents themselves before retiring on the approach of the Imperial troops.

I told his Highness that I had the greatest difficulty in believing this explanation, as it seemed incredible that the insurgents, who, according to the Turkish reports, were composed for the most part of local Armenians, should turn their hand against their own people, and, on the off chance of implicating the officials of the Imperial Government, destroy the houses and property of their friends.

I had, moreover, heard a gruesome report that the young women and children had been carried off from the villages by the troops, and that only the young and helpless or the aged and feeble inhabitants had taken refuge at Moush or Shenik.

I did not deny that probably his Highness had done much to restrain the Kurds and prevent outrages and acts of barbarism, but he had failed to make an example of some of the Kurds caught red-handed in looting, pillaging, and murdering, and, as I had observed some time ago, until he did so the Kurds would not believe that the Central Government really desired to check their brutal proceedings. If he had hung a few of the Agas so that all Armenia saw them, there would have been few outrages to complain of. In fact, it seemed to me, I said, that the Government's policy was to drive the Armenians from the mountainous districts of Sasun to the Moush plains, where they would be under the eye of the authorities, and at the mercy of the Kurds.

All that I had heard pointed to the execution of this plan, and though, happily the loss of life may not have been considerable, the ruin, poverty, and misery caused must remain, and reduce these much-tried people to the verge of both starvation and desperation.

His Highness replied that the Government entertained no such designs as I imagined, that the conflict was solely due to the action of the insurgents, and that the Vali was providing shelter and food for the refugees. The insurrection had been suppressed with comparatively little loss of life, and the Vali had already started on his return to Bitlis.

Mr. Heathcote's reports do not enable me as yet to judge with complete accuracy the real course of events, but I have no doubt his presence at Moush and that of the French Consul has had a beneficial effect, and prevented outrages developing into wholesale massacre, which was inevitable had the Kurds broken entirely loose, as was the case in 1894.

Mr. Heathcote has asked me whether he should remain at Moush, adding that his continued presence in enforced inaction was now more likely to produce a bad than a good effect. After consulting my French colleague, and trying to ascertain without success from the Russian Ambassador when he expected his Consul, who has apparently been detained for the last fortnight at Tiflis by the Governor-General of the Caucasus, to arrive at Moush, I decided to instruct him to remain until he was assured that there was no likelihood of a fresh insurrectionary movement and new military action. The French Ambassador is giving similar instructions to his Consul, but it is unfortunate that the Russian Consul has not arrived in time to co-operate with his two colleagues. The Russian Ambassador is unable to explain the delay, but expressed his willingness that the British and French Consuls should count upon his full co-operation in any action they might decide upon with a view to the local situation and critical condition of affairs in the Moush and Sasun districts.

I have, &c.
(Signed) N. R. O'CONOR.

Inclosure in No. 51.

Memorandum by Mr. Lamb respecting affairs in Sasun.

On the 16th instant I handed to the Grand Vizier a Memorandum showing the names of the villages in Sasun and Talori reported by Vice-Consul Heathcote to have been destroyed by the Badikanli and Khianli Kurds, and his Highness then promised your Excellency that he would cause an inquiry to be made.

The results of this inquiry have now been communicated to your Excellency, in a series of telegrams in the vernacular received from the Vali of Bitlis between the 18th and 21st instant, of which I submit a summary.

In these telegrams the Vali declares the information furnished by this Embassy to be entirely unfounded. He asserts that the orders repeatedly sent by the Grand Vizier

as to restraining the Kurdish tribes, and preventing the population from mixing in matters appertaining solely to the Government, have been strictly followed, and that neither the clans above named nor any other part of the Mussulman population have taken any part in the operations against the Armenian insurgents. On the contrary, all the villages destroyed in Sasun and Talori have been deliberately destroyed by the insurgents themselves, with the insidious design of throwing the odium of these acts of barbarity upon the Turks and attracting attention to the oppression of which they claim to be the victims. He gives the following particulars as to the villages destroyed, on the authority of Reports furnished by the Mutessarif of Moush and Genj :—

(*a.*) *In the Sandjak of Moush*—

13 villages, all Armenian, in the district of Geliguzan, amongst which are named Semal and Shenik.

(*b.*) *In the Sandjak of Genj*—

5 wards of Talori.	All these 12 purely Armenian villages.
*Helink.	
*Ardonk.	
Akchaser.	
*Kuznak.	
*Sevid.	
*Mezré.	
*Hargo.	

And in addition to these the insurgents burned 20 houses in the Mussulman village of Dapik (previously occupied by Andronik), 4 in Latchkan, 1 in Ineghian, and 18 Mussulman houses in the mixed village of Gelimansour, making a total of 43 Mussulman houses destroyed.

The Vali declares that his statements are proved, not only by the *procès-verbaux* drawn up by the civil and judicial functionaries who accompanied the expedition—which had been submitted to, and counter-sealed by, the members of the Christian deputation sent in advance to counsel the insurgents to surrender—but also by the documents seized at Geliguzan, by papers found on the persons of insurgents who were killed in fighting with the troops, and by the depositions of the refugees who have come in to Moush and surrendered to the authorities. The former have already been forwarded by post, and the remainder are being translated by Nishan Effendi, Mouavin of the Mutessarif of Moush, and will follow in due course.

One of the telegrams communicated to me gives the following brief information as to the actual operations against the insurgents.

On Monday, the 3rd (16th) May, the troops advanced simultaneously in four columns from Geliguzan and three columns from Kulp, which is situated a ten hours' distance beyond a lofty mountain range, converging on Talori. Between the Antok and Kapan Daghs' they encountered a band of sixty insurgents, of whom they killed fifty. The insurgents endeavoured to conceal their dead by throwing their corpses and their weapons into the torrent or by burying them. On the following morning, Tuesday, the 4th (17th) May, the troops entered Talori, killing eight more insurgents; and on the 5th (18th) they returned to Geliguzan, leaving only three battalions in Talori.

Some of the insurgents, fleeing before the troops, descended into the plain of Moush, where also they began to attack different villages; but the Vali states that he had made his dispositions for dealing with these.

The women and children from the destroyed villages had mostly come in and claimed the protection of the authorities. On the 3rd (16th) the Vali already estimated the number of these at 1,623, part of whom were at Shenik, under tents, while the rest were at Moush and Kulp.

Bread was being issued to these refugees twice daily, but, as the pecuniary resources of the municipal authorities in Bitlis Vilayet were insufficient, the Vali begs for special arrangements to be sanctioned.

(Signed) H. H. LAMB.

May 23, 1904.

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* These are the same villages as reported by Mr. Heathcote to have been burned by the Khianli.

No. 52.

Sir N. O'Conor to the Marquess of Lansdowne.—(*Received May* 30.)

My Lord, *Constantinople, May* 24, 1904.

I HAVE the honour to forward to your Lordship herewith copy of a despatch from His Majesty's Vice-Consul at Van, reporting a recent encounter between Turkish troops and a band of Armenian revolutionists from Persia.

I have, &c.
(Signed) N. R. O'CONOR.

Inclosure in No. 52.

Vice-Consul Tyrrell to Sir N. O'Conor.

Sir, *Van, May* 7, 1904.

I HAVE the honour to inform your Excellency of an encounter which has just occurred with a band of Armenian revolutionists from Persia.

Information was received here on the evening of the 3rd instant of an affray at the village of Lim, about 20 miles east of Van, between the Shemsiki Kurds and a revolutionary band. All available gendarmes and cavalry were collected, and left Van that night and during the following day for the scene of the fight.

As usual, the first reports were much exaggerated, and I will now state what I believe to be the facts, gathered from the officers of gendarmerie who have returned.

When they arrived at Lim the fighting was over. The body of one revolutionist was produced, and those of three of their horses. Two Kurds had been killed, and one was mortally wounded. After some forcible interrogation, the villagers produced the clothes of six revolutionists, twelve rifles (one Martini, the rest Russian), three horses which had been captured, and some buudles of papers, photographs, &c.

The Kurds had tried to hide everything as quickly as possible, and had even skinned the dead horses and taken off their shoes before the troops arrived. It is probable that they have succeeded in keeping back some of the loot, and almost certain that they have not delivered up all the rifles.

The official belief, from the investigations on the spot, is that the band consisted of six men and six horses, and that each horse carried a pack of ten rifles in addition to its rider; that all the six men were killed, and that none can have escaped (except naked and on foot), but that the Kurds managed to hide five of the bodies, in the hope of being able to keep as much as possible by saying that only one man had been killed.

The revolutionist whose body was found is said to have been the leader, and is identified as a Turkish subject formerly resident in Shattakh.

The band evidently intended to enter Van quietly in the usual way, to hide themselves there, and perhaps cross to Sasun eventually. But investigation of their papers should throw more light on the matter, and will perhaps give the names of the men composing this band. I will report next week any fresh facts which may be brought to light.

I have, &c.
(Signed) G. E. TYRRELL, *Captain.*

No. 53.

The Marquess of Lansdowne to Sir N. O'Conor.

Sir, *Foreign Office, June* 1, 1904.

THE Turkish Ambassador told me to-day that Armenian agitators from Russia and Persia had appeared at Sasun and Talori with the purpose of fomenting disorders. They had succeeded in gathering a few followers, with whose assistance they had pillaged several villages, committed many murders, burnt Mussulman and Armenian houses, and had thus endeavoured to spread terror in those regions.

Musurus Pasha said that the Turkish Government, on learning of this, had lost no

time in sending a sufficient number of regular troops to the spot, who had soon restored order and completely dispersed the agitators.

His Excellency added that certain foreign newspapers, misinformed by agents who had an interest in doing so, had published calumnious intelligence attributing all the misdeeds committed to the Kurds, and tending to distort the facts as to the criminal acts of the Armenian revolutionaries, in order that the whole responsibility for them should fall upon the Turkish authorities. But, under the happy auspices of the Sultan, order and tranquillity were now completely assured in those regions. The local authorities were, by His Majesty's orders, providing for the wants of those who had suffered from the aggressive acts and the crimes of the agitators, and were granting an amnesty to those of the inhabitants who, after having allowed themselves to be led away by the revolutionaries, were now making their submission.

I am, &c.
(Signed) LANSDOWNE.

No. 54.

Sir N. O'Conor to the Marquess of Lansdowne.—(Received June 6.)

My Lord, *Constantinople, May 30, 1904.*

WITH reference to my despatch of the 24th instant, I have the honour to forward to your Lordship herewith copy of a further despatch from His Majesty's Vice-Consul at Van, reporting further details of the recent incursion of Armenian revolutionaries into that vilayet.

I have, &c.
(Signed) N. R. O'CONOR.

Inclosure in No. 54.

Vice-Consul Tyrrell to Sir N. O'Conor.

Sir, *Van, May 14, 1904.*

IN continuation of my despatch of the 7th instant, I have the honour to report that it is now believed that only one of the six revolutionists mentioned was killed.

The Vali tells me that, in his second report to Constantinople, he has stated that the band consisted of six men; that it was dispersed, but that only one was killed. He admits that he first reported that the band consisted of fifty men, but this was when the news was first brought into Van, and before the police had been sent out.

The officials say that the five men who escaped went back to Persia, but others say that all five succeeded in getting back into Van, with their arms.

On the evening of the 8th instant a telegram was received from Serai, saying that 170 revolutionists had crossed the border into the district inhabited by the Nilan Kurds. Cavalry and Zaptiehs went out at once, but could find no trace of them, and there appear to have been no grounds whatever for the telegram.

The Vali thinks that some one wants to make mischief and excite the Kurds, and says that he will try and find out how this telegram originated.

I have, &c.
(Signed) G. E. TYRRELL, *Captain.*

No. 55.

Sir N. O'Conor to the Marquess of Lansdowne.—(Received June 6.)

My Lord, *Constantinople, June 1, 1904.*

IN reply to a telegram which I addressed to Mr. Heathcote on the 23rd ultimo, informing him, as I had the honour to report to your Lordship in my despatch of the 24th ultimo, that the Sublime Porte had learned that the insurgents were dispersed and tranquillity restored in the Moush district, I received a telegraphic answer on the 26th ultimo, stating that he feared that Armenian Sasun had been annihilated, and that it was in this way that tranquillity had been restored. Mr. Heathcote added that the Vali denied that the number of refugees in Moush amounted to as many as

3,000, but admitted that there might be 2,000. The Vali further denied to His Majesty's Vice-Consul that the Kurds had participated in the repressive measures taken by the Turkish troops, but refused to offer any explanations as to how a body of insurgents, which he himself estimated at 1,200 men, could have left so many widows and orphans. He, moreover, could offer no suggestion to account for what he himself styled the mysterious disappearance of all the males.

On the 27th instant I informed Mr. Heathcote, by telegraph, that the Grand Vizier had stated to me, in the course of the conversation reported to your Lordship in my above-quoted despatch, that an amnesty would be granted to all those insurgents who laid down their arms, and I instructed him to ascertain what steps had been taken by the local authorities to give effect to this measure.

Mr. Heathcote replied, on the following day, that the Vali had informed the Bishops that the insurgents who surrendered would be pardoned if they came in within eight days, but that the men who had already come to Moush were being treated as prisoners, and that it was unlikely that many would trust the Turkish offer. Mr. Heathcote added that neither insurgents nor fugitives would be allowed to return to their homes without special orders from here, since the Vali considers Armenian inhabitants of the mountains as intruders on Kurdish property, and is evidently desirous that they should be constrained to settle in the plain, although he denies that such is his wish, but professes that the refugees are themselves asking to be allowed to do so.

The information in Mr. Heathcote's possession does not, he says, bear out this statement, and he has reason to believe that the mountaineers dread nothing more than to be forced to settle in the plain.

With regard to the above statements, I think it is evident that the male population has fled with the insurgents before the Imperial troops, and taken shelter in the extensive range of hills of the Sasun district.

I am constantly impressing on the Porte the danger of the situation and the lamentable impression that must be created in Europe if the Government tolerates a massacre and persecution of the Armenians, whose livelihood depends upon the preservation of their poor homes in the mountains of Sasun; the Grand Vizier continues to assure me that he is doing all in his power to restore tranquillity and to protect the Christian inhabitants.

The Russian Chargé d'Affaires informed me yesterday that his Consul would arrive at Moush immediately.

I have, &c.
(Signed) N. R. O'CONOR.

No. 56.

The Marquess of Lansdowne to Sir N. O'Conor.

Sir, *Foreign Office, June* 6, 1904.

I HAVE received your Excellency's despatch of the 24th ultimo, reporting a conversation which you had with the Grand Vizier on the subject of the recent disturbances in Armenia.

I approve the language which you held on this occasion to his Highness, and I concur in the instructions which you have sent to Mr. Heathcote, to remain at Moush until he is assured that there is no likelihood of a fresh insurrectionary movement and renewed military action.

I am, &c.
(Signed) LANSDOWNE.

No. 57.

The Marquess of Lansdowne to Sir N. O'Conor.

(Telegraphic.) *Foreign Office, June* 7, 1904.

A GOOD impression would be created if a British officer—a soldier for preference—were allowed by the Turkish Government to accompany the troops engaged in operations at Sasun. We presume that Captain Tyrrell could be spared for a few weeks from Van.

No. 58.

Sir E. Monson to the Marquess of Lansdowne. —(*Received June* 11.)

My Lord, *Paris, June* 10, 1904.

I HAVE the honour to inform your Lordship that M. Delcassé made a statement yesterday afternoon in the Chamber of Deputies in reply to a question addressed to him by M. de Pressensé on the subject of the disturbances in Armenia.

His Excellency began by reading an extract from a report from the French Ambassador in Constantinople, somewhat attenuating the description given by M. de Pressensé of the violence and excesses of which the Turks have been guilty in dealing with the Armenian malcontents. He went on, however, to lay the blame for the present lamentable state of affairs mainly to the account of the Ottoman Government, and stated that the French Ambassador had been instructed to concert with his colleagues in making forcible representations to the Porte, to intimate that the French Consular officers would remain in the disturbed districts so long as the population had ground for apprehension, and to warn the Turkish Government, in their own interests, and in view especially of recent events in Macedonia, not to cherish the illusion that they could continue indefinitely to avoid the responsibility incumbent upon them.

I have, &c.

(Signed) EDMUND MONSON.

No. 59.

Sir N. O'Conor to the Marquess of Lansdowne.—(*Received June* 13.)

(Extract.) *Constantinople, June* 6, 1904.

WITH reference to my despatch of the 1st instant, I have the honour to report that I communicated to the Grand Vizier to-day the substance of Mr. Heathcote's despatch, a copy of which is inclosed herewith, on recent events in the Sasun district of Armenia.

His Highness asserted again in the most positive manner that the Kurds had been prevented from approaching the seat of the disturbances, or in taking part in the military operations of the troops; that the local authorities did not give the order to advance against the rebels until assured that they had declined the mediation of the Delegates sent by the Bishops; that the accounts given by the priests, who were known to be favourable to the insurgents, were unreliable; and that a large military force had purposely been sent against the insurgents as the best means of preventing excesses or unnecessary effusion of blood.

His Highness reckoned the number of insurgents who had crossed the frontier at about 600, and proofs of an extensive conspiracy aiming at the overthrow of the Government had been found.

Further information which had lately come to hand showed that meetings had been held in Kars and other places within the Russian frontier, in which the plans of the conspirators were openly discussed, and all arrangements made for a general insurrection.

He hardly expected me to give implicit credence to his report of what had taken place, but he would immediately instruct the Vali to let the British and French Consuls, and also the Russian Consul, if he were at Moush, see the full reports of the Commission that had recorded the events of the last few days, and taken down the evidence given by the Armenians themselves.

I said that, although my present information was too incomplete to form a definite opinion upon the real course of events, there was no doubt that at least twenty-five Armenian villages had been destroyed and burnt, that some 2,000 destitute and homeless Armenian refugees were in Moush alone, and some hundreds in other places; that among them there were neither young women or able-bodied men, that we were ignorant of the lot of both, and that the best we could hope for was that they had retired to the mountains before the troops, but that there was a gruesome report that the former had been carried off by the soldiers. It was essential, however, that an immediate stop should be put to the burning and pillaging of the homes of these poor defenceless inhabitants, who only asked for peace and security for their lives and property, and such forbearance as would make their existence possible. It was generally believed that the Government wished to drive the Armenians from the mountains of Sasun into the plains. Such a

policy could only be carried out by the extermination of the Armenians, who would be the constant prey and victims of the Kurds who took their place in the mountains. Had the scheme ever been entertained, it must be abandoned, and if the Imperial Government were not to be held responsible for all the crime and sufferings that would follow, they must take effective measures to prevent a sinister policy of this sort being carried out. It was impossible to hold the Government free of blame for recent events, and if further outrages followed after the Government's official statement that the insurrection was suppressed, the responsibility would be grave indeed.

I did not, I added, wish to deny that the orders sent by the Grand Vizier and the precautions taken have resulted in a mitigation of outrage and the prevention of massacre of an extensive character, but it was necessary to make an example of any Kurd found in the act of committing an outrage upon an Armenian, and to hold the authorities responsible for their misdeeds.

His Highness replied that he had done all that lay in his power, and that, at my request, he had for the last twelve months sent telegram after telegram to the local authorities warning them against the effusion of blood and the interference of the Kurds or Bashi Bozouks, but that they had been in face of a serious insurrectionary outbreak planned and plotted on foreign soil, and carried out by several hundred insurgents such as Andronik and others. He did not think that he could, under the circumstances, have done more, and he begged me not to draw conclusions from the incomplete report of Mr. Heathcote, but to wait until he had verified his facts and seen the reports which the Vali would show him.

His Highness added that numbers of the insurgents were laying down their arms every day, and that an amnesty had been granted to all who did so, and provision made for the destitute who had fled to Moush and other places.

Inclosure in No. 59.

Mr. Heathcote to Sir N. O'Conor.

(Extract.) *Moush, May 22, 1904.*

I HAVE the honour to report that, in accordance with your Excellency's instructions, I left Bitlis on Saturday, the 14th instant, and arrived at Moush the next afternoon. While traversing the plain I obtained the impression that the news of the Turkish successes in Sasun had restored a certain measure of confidence, but that there had been great fear in the Armenian villages during the first few days of hostilities, when it was reported that the insurgents had repulsed the troops, and the possibility existed that the Kurds might desire reprisals. The same may be said also of the town of Moush, which is reasonably tranquil at present, though the Armenians open their shops as little as possible.

It is known here that Geliguzan has since been captured after prolonged fighting, with a great quantity of supplies, ammunition, papers, and money; and it is rumoured that Talori has already been attacked and taken. The Mutessarif believes that this is the case, and that if so, all organized resistance will shortly be at an end, and that the insurgents will be prepared to surrender. Armenians think that they will more probably retire to some mountain stronghold, which the troops will have difficulty in capturing.

A great number of villages have been destroyed, and, as is to be expected, the authorities attribute this to the insurgents, while the Armenians are convinced that it is the work of the soldiers and Kurds; and though I was told in Bitlis by Armenians that the rebels had burnt some villages, yet I fear that if the truth can be known the troops will be found to have committed great excesses, and I have little doubt that Kurds have been operating with the troops, though I have as yet no positive information on the subject.

From recent reports it would seem that the resistance at Geliguzan was not very serious, and I have as yet heard no explanation of the reasons which may have led to this important centre being left comparatively undefended.

In the last few days rumours have reached Moush of fighting in the plain, but I have so far been unable to ascertain the details. According to official accounts, which are not denied by Armenians so far as I know, certain insurgents who had escaped from the mountains fell on one or two parties of gendarmes at fords of the Kara Sou, killing and wounding some twenty-five men. A small body of troops were sent eastwards, but I have not heard of the dispatch of any more. It is rumoured that Andronik himself is

at the head of these bands, and as he is understood to be the fighting chief of the insurgents it is to be feared that further conflicts may now arise in the plain. Armenak having been killed no important leader is known to remain in the mountains except Vahan, who is regarded as an organizer rather than a fighter.

The plain of Moush is so totally open and level that no effective resistance can be offered to the operations of regular troops. If the scene of disturbance is likely to be moved to the eastwards I should be in some anxiety about the maintenance of order in Bitlis. The Government of that town has been intrusted during the absence of the Vali to the Cadi, who, though animated by good intentions, lacks, as I fear, the energy which is absolutely necessary for the control of the fanatical Kurds of the place.

The command of the few troops left there is in better hands, for, as I have reported to your Excellency, Lieutenant-Colonel Saïd Bey is a capable officer.

The French Consul from Van arrived here on the 20th instant; we have not yet had an opportunity for a full discussion of the situation, and in the absence of the Russian Consul, of whom we have no information whatever, I presume that we are not empowered to raise the question of mediation; but from the conversation we have had, I think that he shares my opinion that the events of this year have offered no occasion for any such mediation as was effected at Zeitoun, the insurgents having been repulsed from the beginning of hostilities, and not having been in a position to surrender an important stronghold, or to make any such concessions as must be the basis of effective negotiation.

It appears to us, too, that it would be difficult in the present scattered and disorganized state of the insurgent bands to enter into communication with them, or to have any assurance that promises made by one leader would bind another.

With regard to the Zeitoun precedent, I would venture to submit that the disarmament of the Moslem inhabitants of this country is totally impossible, and that the alternative, a general permission to bear arms, is in practice at least equally unattainable.

No. 60.

Sir N. O'Conor to the Marquess of Lansdowne.—(*Received June* 13.)

My Lord, *Constantinople, June* 8, 1904.

I HAVE the honour to forward to your Lordship herewith copy of a despatch from His Majesty's Acting Consul at Erzeroum, reporting the concentration of Armenian revolutionaries on the frontier.

I have, &c.
(Signed) N. R. O'CONOR.

Inclosure in No. 60.

Acting Consul Shipley to Sir N. O'Conor.

Sir, *Erzeroum, May* 31, 1904.

I HAVE the honour to report that very large bands of revolutionaries are said to be concentrated all along the frontier. Without attaching too much credence to the local estimate, viz., 1,500, it is certain that they are in considerable numbers.

Major-General Ahmed Pasha, Commandant of the frontier, left the town suddenly on Sunday for Hassan-Kaleh.

An American, lately come from Bitlis, reported suffering and unrest among the population of the Mutessariflik of Khinis, caused by the troops, who are, I am informed, a turbulent and undisciplined lot. I have several times called the attention of the military authorities to the necessity of making proper provision for the soldiers quartered in the villages, but I do not think that anything has been done in that direction.

Now that the fine season is beginning, there is, I should think, no reason why the troops should not be put under tents, which would, at all events, insure to the women a measure of that privacy which they lack completely in some houses under the present circumstances.

I have, &c.
(Signed) A. SHIPLEY.

No. 61.

Sir N. O'Conor to the Marquess of Lansdowne.—(*Received June* 13.)

My Lord, *Constantinople, June* 8, 1904.

WITH reference to my despatch of the 6th instant, I have the honour to forward to your Lordship herewith copy of a Memorandum by Mr. Lamb, First Dragoman at His Majesty's Embassy, reporting the seizure of insurgents and arms at Sronk, in the Plain of Moush.

I have, &c.
(Signed) N. R. O'CONOR.

Inclosure in No. 61.

Memorandum by Mr. Lamb.

THE Vali of Bitlis telegraphed from Moush on the 3rd June that the Alai Bey, Izzet Bey, whom he had dispatched with a force of gendarmerie to search for Andronik in the villages of the Moush Plain, had found in the Armenian village of Sronk six villagers who had returned from Sasun after the dispersal of the insurgents. In their houses were found ten rifles, some of which were Russian Mausers, three revolvers, a number of the large bandoliers used by the insurgents, rifle cartridges and loose bullets, thirty-two okes of smokeless powder, and other articles, which they declared, under cross-examination, to have been purchased from certain Mussulman villagers whom they had indicated. The Vali adds that he instituted a prosecution against the latter, and inquires whether he is to treat the six Armenians as insurgents who have surrendered and claimed amnesty.

A further telegram, dated on the following day, relates that a certain Mirat had been discovered in hiding at Sronk and brought to Moush. This individual stated that he had been one of the leaders of the insurrection. Their plan had been to organize a general rising throughout the Plain of Moush on the day of the fight at Geliguzan, but the plan had failed. He himself had been deluded by other revolutionary agents, but now saw the error he had committed and threw himself on the Imperial clemency.

The information given by this man led to the discovery of 1 Mauser, 7 Martinis, and 10 other breech-loaders, 7 flintlocks, 174 cartridges, 2 hand-jars, 1 sword, a quantity of powder and bullets, and three cans full of dynamite, all of which the Armenians declared that they had purchased from Mussulman villagers whose names they gave. The dynamite was sent to the Artillery Staff at Moush for analysis, with a view to establishing its origin, but the Artillery having reported that such analysis was impossible, and the stuff itself dangerous, it was decided to destroy it, after a Mixed Commission had drawn up a *procès-verbal* containing an exact description of the shape and appearance of the recipients, which would be handed to the judicial authorities.

June 7, 1904.

No. 62.

The Marquess of Lansdowne to Sir N. O'Conor.

Sir, *Foreign Office, June* 15, 1904.

THE Turkish Ambassador called upon me to-day, and made a statement to the following effect:—

The statements made by the Grand Vizier to Sir Nicholas O'Conor with regard to recent incidents in certain villages of Anatolia have been incompletely reported by the correspondent of Reuter's agency at Constantinople. His Highness laid special stress on the fact that it was the Armenian bands who attacked and burned the villages with a view to inducing the peaceful inhabitants to join them. The evidence which had since been collected established this fact beyond all question. The Imperial Government had made every sacrifice in order to put an end to these acts of brigandage

and to re-establish order. They were showing the greatest generosity towards the Armenians who had submitted, and were granting them assistance of every kind.

Thanks to the measures taken, order and tranquillity had been restored.

I am, &c.
(Signed) LANSDOWNE.

No. 63.

Sir N. O'Conor to the Marquess of Lansdowne.—(Received June 19.)

(Telegraphic.) *Therapia, June 19, 1904.*

FOLLOWING telegram, dated yesterday, received from His Majesty's Vice-Consul at Moush :—

"Nothing serious to report last four days. Vali's attitude and policy seem to have been changed by some instructions which he has received from Constantinople, and which have evidently been issued in consequence of pressure from His Majesty's Embassy."

The Grand Vizier has agreed to tell the Vali that he will be held personally responsible for further outrages, also he has agreed to provide funds for rebuilding the houses of the Armenians in Sasun. The British, French, and Russian Consuls at Moush are acting together, and I am in close communication with my French and Russian colleagues here. His Majesty's Vice-Consul at Van is expected to reach Moush to-day.

No. 64.

Sir N. O'Conor to the Marquess of Lansdowne.—(Received June 20.)

My Lord, *Constantinople, June 13, 1904.*

I HAVE the honour to forward to your Lordship herewith copy of a despatch from His Majesty's Acting-Consul at Erzeroum, reporting an attempt by two Armenians to provoke disorders at Erzeroum, and the Vali's promptitude in preventing an outbreak.

I have, &c.
(Signed) N. R. O'CONOR.

Inclosure in No. 64.

Acting-Consul Shipley to Sir N. O'Conor.

Sir, *Erzeroum, June 4, 1904.*

I HAVE the honour to report that two days before the Prophet's birthday, *i.e.*, on Friday, the 27th ultimo, a rumour spread about the bazaar that some Armenians of the town had grossly insulted Mohammed's memory. The Vali heard of the matter, and his inquiries elicited the fact that two shoemakers had stamped the soles of several pairs of boots with a seal bearing the words "Ya Muhamed," and had sold them to Moslems, thus causing them to tread on the name of their Prophet.

The Vali had them arrested at once, sent out a great number of plain-clothes police to stop the discussion of the affair in the streets, and took every means of preventing popular excitement from coming to a head and breaking out. He claims, and I have absolutely no reason for not believing, that the two Armenian shoemakers acted, probably under orders from the Committees, with the object of provoking disorders, and that he crushed at its birth what might have developed into very serious trouble.

His Excellency asked for permission from Constantinople to send the two men—who did not deny the use of the stamp, but said they could not read Turkish, and had

used it in ignorance—to some other vilayet for trial. He was instructed to send them to Mosul, and they started a week ago by night.

I have, &c.
(Signed) A. SHIPLEY.

No. 65.

Sir N. O'Conor to the Marquess of Lansdowne.—(Received June 20.)

My Lord, *Constantinople, June* 14, 1904.

I COMMUNICATED to the Grand Vizier yesterday the substance of the inclosed despatch from Mr. Heathcote, dated the 29th May, and told him that there seemed to be no doubt that, notwithstanding his repeated promises and assurances, the Kurds had taken an active part in the destruction of the life and property of the unfortunate Armenians inhabiting the mountainous districts of Sasun and other places.

His Excellency contended that the loss of life was due to the inhabitants taking up arms with the insurgents who had come from abroad, that all his information showed that these insurgents had planned for the last twelve months a widespread conspiracy which was to have broken out simultaneously in various districts, and that although there had unfortunately been considerable effusion of blood, it would have been much greater had it not been for the large force of regular troops sent to quell the insurrection, and the measures taken by the Central Government in attaching to the army the Procureur-General and other civil officials with a view to prevent excesses.

I told his Highness that I had always mistrusted the assurances I had received about the Kurds, but that, whether he himself was deceived by the reports of the Vali or not, it seemed difficult to believe that such ruin and devastation should have been inflicted on the inhabitants had those barbarous hordes been kept at a distance from the seat of military operations.

We were still without precise information to enable a correct estimate to be made of the excesses committed, but I had heard rumours of extensive massacres, and the report of Mr. Heathcote seemed to credit these stories. The truth would be known before long, and if these accounts proved to be true, a terrible responsibility would fall, and justly fall, upon his Highness and the Imperial Government. The Grand Vizier replied that if crimes had been committed the Imperial Government would not attempt to shield the perpetrators, and punishment of the severest order would be inflicted upon the guilty.

I said that these assurances were vague and unsatisfactory in face of the demand I had often made that any Kurds caught in the act of massacring or plundering the Armenians should immediately meet with capital punishment. There was no other way of persuading these lawless tribesmen to believe that the Imperial Government disapproved of their acts, and would hold them responsible with their lives.

All the information we had received proved the design of hunting the Armenians from the mountains, and the cynical language of the Vali, in which he questioned their right of ownership of their poor mountain hamlets, showed his intention of driving them into the plains. His Highness must give a proof of his reprobating such policy, and he could do this by sending orders to the Vali to allow all the refugees who desired to return to their homes to do so at once, and to afford them protection and security against the attacks of the Kurds. Very probably their houses and lands were already occupied by the latter, so that nothing short of the most energetic action on the part of the Government would enable them to return.

His Highness willingly agreed to send instructions to the Vali of Bitlis in this sense, adding that if any of the refugees preferred to remain in the plains of Moush they should be equally protected.

I saw this telegram dispatched before I left the Sublime Porte, and in the evening I advised Mr. Heathcote accordingly.

His Highness subsequently read to me a telegram which he had received two days ago from Bitlis, a translation of which I have the honour to inclose herewith. Its tenour is very different from that of Mr. Heathcote's despatch, and its statements inspire me with little confidence; however, it is gratifying to be able to report that the anxiety felt a short time ago as to the security of the Armenians in Bitlis has subsided, and that neither there nor in the plains of Moush have any outrages been reported.

I have the honour to inclose herewith to your Lordship a telegram which I received from Mr. Heathcote last night, as also my reply.

I have not thought it advisable to authorize Mr. Heathcote to leave Moush as, although the past cannot be repaired, I consider his presence and that of his colleagues highly desirable for the present.

I informed the Grand Vizier yesterday that, under instructions from your Lordship, I had requested Captain Tyrrell, His Majesty's Vice-Consul at Vân, to proceed at once to the seat of military operations, whether at Sasun or elsewhere.

His Highness made no objection, and said that orders would be given immediately to the Valis to afford him an escort and all facilities, although he travelled outside the radius of his proper Consular district.

I have just received a telegram from Captain Tyrrell stating that he will start at once for Geliguzan, and will be in Moush at the end of the week.

It is impossible to acquit the Ottoman Government of blame for the lamentable occurrences which have marked the suppression of revolution during the last six weeks, but still I consider that some credit must be given to the Grand Vizier for precautionary measures which have at least put a limit to the excesses which otherwise would have certainly followed the outbreak of what at one time was intended to be an extensive and serious revolutionary movement.

I have, &c.
(Signed) N. R. O'CONOR.

Inclosure 1 in No. 65.

Mr. Heathcote to Sir N. O'Conor.

Sir, *Moush, May 29, 1904.*

WITH reference to my despatch of the 22nd May, I have the honour to report that the Vali of Bitlis returned here from Sasun on the 23rd instant, accompanied by two battalions and 1,000 more women and children, making 3,000 refugees in all.

The next day the French Consul and I called on him, and his attitude left us both with the impression that there had been little exaggeration in the Armenian accounts of recent occurrences.

To the suggestion that perhaps the Kurds had committed some excesses, he replied that no Kurds had taken part in the proceedings, and that there had been no excesses whatever except those committed by the insurgents.

He maintained his previous estimate of 200 rebels, come from other provinces or from abroad, and 1,000 natives of Sasun who had joined them; and when we asked how this small body could leave so many widows and orphans, and what had become of all the males of Sasun, he could only say, with some apparent embarrassment, that it was curious how the men had disappeared.

He practically admitted that there was no one left in the villages of the mountain, and, as a matter of fact, I imagine that the majority are in hiding among the rocks, while a large number have been killed and others are concealed in villages of the plain.

The few men who are found are at once imprisoned as insurgents, in spite of the Vali's promises to M. Robin, and only the women and children are admitted to the status of innocent victims of the late troubles; and even they receive but little consideration. The bread supplied to them is scanty in quantity and of infamous quality, and no medical help at all is given to those among them who are wounded, while they are exposed to much ill-treatment by their guards.

They are now to be removed from Moush to a neighbouring village, where they are to be guarded by a few gendarmes only. This may be better for them, and it is probably in the interest of public health that they should not be kept in the town; but, on the other hand, their removal deprives them of such private charity as they have hitherto been able to receive.

The real insurgents are, I think, making their way to the Persian frontier, and M. Robin tells me he met some who evidently had that intention. The weight of the heavy punishment meted out will therefore have fallen either on the innocent or on those who at the worst had only taken up arms in defence of their homes.

On the other hand, I am glad to report that the fear of disturbances and excesses in the plain, which appeared imminent last week, has so far not been realized. Two or three villages have been more or less destroyed, but for some days past there have not

even been rumours of further troubles in that direction; though some believe that there has been a concentration of the flying insurgents in the crater of Nimrud.

In the interests of general tranquillity, I am inclined to think that, next to their final escape, no better solution could be hoped for, as that mountain, though large, is so open, and its vast slopes so smooth and devoid of villages that they offer little scope for guerilla warfare or for a repetition of what has occurred in Sasun.

There have also been reports current of a disturbance at Bitlis, but I trust they are only bazaar rumours and will prove unfounded.

On the 25th, the Ferik Salik Pasha returned to Moush with one more battalion. This makes four which have so far come back, and the General asserts that only three are left in the mountain; as there are ten in Moush, and as there were certainly at least nineteen at the beginning, the disappearance of six battalions needs some explanation.

At a later interview the Vali told me, in reply to my inquiries, that he was offering pardon to all who would surrender. It appears that he has instructed the Bishosp to make the offer known, but with the condition that the surrender must be effected within a week. He asserted that a small number of men had already come in, but I have reason to think that they were at once imprisoned, and with the former prisoners, about forty in number, will only be able to obtain their liberty if they will declare that all the destruction in the mountain was the work of the insurgents. No hope has been held out to them of returning to their homes, and, under these circumstances, I cannot hope that many will avail themselves of a pardon so illusory.

The officials here would seem to be strongly in favour of establishing the Sasun Armenians in the plain, though, with their usual reticence, they will not say so openly. I am convinced, however, that their Reports recommend this course. The Vali says he is awaiting instructions on the subject from Constantinople, and when I pointed out that, in common justice, the fugitives should be allowed to return to their homes, he tried to persuade me that the Armenians of the mountains were merely intruders who had settled on Kurdish lands, either unlawfully or at best as farmers on the Metayer system. He also asserted that the judicial examination of the refugees showed that the majority of them desired to be established elsewhere. As I told Ferid Bey, the whole of my information points in the opposite direction, and I am sure that, like all mountaineers, these people are ardently attached to their homes, and dread nothing more than a transference to the plains. I cannot say, and indeed it is immaterial, whether the Governor-General believes these two stories or not.

The refugee women and other Armenians believe that the land is already being divided among Kurds, and that it is with that object that certain Sheikhs and tribal Chiefs are now here, notably the young Sheikh of Zilan, a son and apparently a worthy successor to the fanatic who bore that name in 1895, and who died some two years ago.

Salik Pasha too spoke to me of the expected arrival of nomad Kurds in Sasun this year, seemingly regarding them as a valuable safeguard against any fresh insurrectionary outbreak.

On the 26th instant a disturbance occurred at the village of Derik near the bridge over the Murad Su or Eastern Euphrates, a few hours to the north of Moush. I see no reason to doubt the Armenian version of the matter as an ordinary cattle raid by a Captain of Hamidieh, resistance to which was followed by the plunder and destruction of the village, but it has been represented to the Vali as an attack by insurgents on regular troops, and I fear will be treated as such.

I have, &c.
(Signed) W. J. HEATHCOTE.

Inclosure 2 in No. 65.

Vali of Bitlis to the Grand Vizier.

(Translation.)
(Telegraphic.) *May* 29 (*June* 11), 1904.

ON the 6th (19th) February, 29th February (11th April), and 13th (26th) April, before the arrival of the Imperial troops at the head-quarters of the insurgents, the Armenian rebels had attacked the mixed Mussulman and Christian village of Dapik and the purely Kurdish one of Latchkan. At Dapik they imprisoned the Mussulman inhabitants in a Christian house, and in both villages perpetrated every sort of violence and pillage, killing twenty-five persons, wounding ten, and burning the houses.

After that, on the Imperial troops entering Latchkan, which was close to the insurrectionary zone, an advisory body was formed composed of the Bishops, some members of the Administrative Council and judicial functionaries, and through their instrumentality the Priest Arakel was sent with a letter to give advice to the insurgents. After waiting a day and a night for his return, they advanced to Shenik and Semal, for the purpose of getting nearer to the insurrectionary zone, when they met the aforementioned Arakel, and received the answer that the insurgents refused to listen to advice.

At that moment the houses, which were suddenly set on fire by the insurgents (who were seen in the distance), began to burst into flames and bullets to rain from all sides upon the Imperial troops. The soldiers also in return began to pursue and to chastise the insurgents. The Consuls here are fully aware that no sort of irregularity took place in the course of these operations, which were thus truly and unreservedly carried out in a judicious manner, so as not to be a mark for any kind of censure—the probability of some such objections being raised having been taken into consideration with the judicial commission—and they (the Consuls) show complete satisfaction with the appropriate communications and assurances given them at every interview.

Confidence has been restored amongst the Armenian refugees, who now amount to about 700 men and 4,000 women, so that at the present moment there is no cause for anxiety left.

Last Thursday, indeed, under the pretext of fear, a few shops in the town were not opened, yet when officials were sent out immediately, as a demonstrative measure, to draw up a list of the shops that remained closed, yesterday they were all opened of their own accord.

There is no question here of enforced settlement in the plain of Moush, nor has any order been received from your Highness that could lead to any steps being taken in that direction.

There is no probability of any commotion here, nor has the population gone beyond the limits of submission. Should such a thing occur, on the one hand, immediate information will be given to the Commander-in-chief of the fourth Army Corps, and on the other punishment will be inflicted on the culprits.

Inclosure 3 in No. 65.

Mr. Heathcote to Sir N. O'Conor.

(Telegraphic.) *Moush, June* 13, 1904.

YESTERDAY my French and Russian colleagues and myself had a long conversation, in which we found ourselves in agreement upon the following point. We recognize that our observations to the authorities, however well founded, are met with systematic denials, in spite of our having made representations to them during nearly a whole month. If therefore, as appears probable, the Sublime Porte continues to encourage officials here in their disregard of our representations, our stay here seems fruitless. I regret to say daily outrages continue.

French and Russian Consuls are telegraphing to their respective Embassies in the above sense.

Inclosure 4 in No. 65.

Sir N. O'Conor to Mr. Heathcote.

(Telegraphic.) *Constantinople, June* 14, 1904.

YESTERDAY the Grand Vizier telegraphed instructions to the Vali of Moush to allow such Armenians as have congregated there to return to their homes to afford protection and assistance to them, as also to those who may prefer to settle in the plain of Moush.

I should be glad to know whether the fugitives' houses have been occupied by nomad Arabs or Kurds, and, if so, to what extent this has taken place; also whether you and your colleagues have visited the fugitives and ascertained whether they are willing to return to their homes. Were any specific demands included in the representations alluded to in your telegram of yesterday, and, if so, I should be glad to know what they were. You say that outrages continue daily. What is their nature and extent?

As I am at present doing all I can to impress upon the Sublime Porte the immediate necessity of stopping all attacks upon, or prosecution of, the Armenians who live in the mountains, I should be greatly assisted by any definite statement of recent outrages by troops or ill-treatment by official authorities.

The Sublime Porte states that insurgent Armenians to the number of 600 have surrendered, and have, with the exception of those actually caught committing crime, been pardoned. I should be glad to hear whether this is the case and where they are.

Apparently the Ottoman Government have no objection to troops engaged in operations against insurgents being accompanied by you and your colleagues. Should there still be any troops operating in Sasun or Talori district you had better arrange for this.

I suggested to Captain Tyrrell by telegraph on the 10th instant that he should proceed to Talori district, but as yet have received no reply from him.

No. 66.

Sir N. O'Conor to the Marquess of Lansdowne.—(Received June 20.)

My Lord, *Therapia, June* 12, 1904.

WITH reference to previous correspondence, I have the honour to transmit to your Lordship herewith a translation of a telegram which has been received by the Grand Vizier from the Vali of Bitlis, dated the 7th instant, respecting the revolutionary movement among the Armenians of that vilayet.

I have, &c.
(Signed) N. R. O'CONOR.

Inclosure in No. 66.

Memorandum by Mr. Lamb.

THE Vali of Bitlis telegraphed on the 25th instant that the Alai Bey, who was still continuing his search for Andronik in the villages of Moush plain, having obtained information that eight insurgents were in hiding at Savi [?], situated about 10 miles from the town of Moush, proceeded there with a considerable force by night. On approaching the village at dawn on the 22nd they were fired upon from a field, one zaptieh being wounded in the leg.

Having located the spot from which the shots had come they opened a hot fire upon it, after maintaining which for some time they advanced, and found the dead bodies of seven insurgents. One of them proved to be a certain Parsegh, of whom the authorities had been in search for upwards of four years. From documents found on him it appeared that the chief leaders of the insurrection had been :—

1. Inak (Armenak), who was killed during the fighting in Sassoun ;
2. Andronik ;
3. Kevork ;
4. Parsegh himself ;

and that they had intended promoting a similar movement in Zeitoun.

Further information obtained by the Alai Bey was to the effect that the insurgents had sent four men to Khinis to serve as guides to some other revolutionaries who were expected to cross over the Russian frontier at Kara Orman (? Kara Ourghan).

The Vali further reports that the number of refugees at Moush has now reached 3,000, and that, in order to relieve the congestion in the town, efforts were being made to distribute them amongst the villages. Some 600 men had been offered subsistence money in return for work on the road between Moush and Bitlis, but had refused to work.

(Signed) HARRY H. LAMB.

Moush, June 11, 1904.

No. 67.

Sir N. O'Conor to the Marquess of Lansdowne.—(*Received June* 20.)

My Lord, *Therapia, June* 15, 1904.

WITH reference to my despatch of the 24th ultimo and to previous correspondence respecting the recent events that have taken place in the neighbourhood of Moush, I have the honour to state that Mr. Heathcote reports that the Russian Consul, who was expected about the 10th ultimo, only reached that place on the 11th instant, and that he has since joined his British and French colleagues in their discussions and representations to the Turkish authorities.

Mr. Heathcote further reports the arrival at Moush from Bitlis on the 10th instant of a Russian Colonel. This is presumably Staff-Colonel Loukoff, whose approaching visit to Erzeroum has already been reported to me by His Majesty's Consul at that place. Mr. Shipley, in informing me of the Colonel's pending visit, stated that it was believed that he was coming officially to inspect the concentration of Turkish troops in Armenia, which had caused excitement in Russian circles in the Caucasus.

I have, &c.

(Signed) N. R. O'CONOR.

No. 68.

Sir N. O'Conor to the Marquess of Lansdowne.—(*Received June* 24.)

(Telegraphic.) *Constantinople, June* 24, 1904.

I HAVE received the following telegram, dated to-day, from His Majesty's Acting Consul at Erzeroum :—

"On Monday last Turkish troops surrounded 45 Armenians near frontier, and killed 37, taking 5 wounded as prisoners. The Turkish loss is reckoned at 4 men killed, 15 others wounded. There are said to be 300 Armenians in concealment on the frontier. Turkish troops are collected to the number of 500."

By the word "frontier" Mr. Shipley means the Russian frontier, I presume.

No. 69.

Sir N. O'Conor to the Marquess of Lansdowne.—(*Received June* 27.)

My Lord, *Therapia, June* 21, 1904.

IN continuation of my despatch of the 14th instant, I have the honour to report that, after consulting with the Russian Chargé d'Affaires and in agreement with the French Ambassador, I again spoke to the Grand Vizier yesterday in regard to the position of affairs in Armenia.

I learnt from his Highness that he had informed the Council of Ministers of the several assurances and promises he had made to me, and that they had come to the following decisions ;—

1. That permission should be granted to the refugees at Moush and other places to return to their homes in Sasun.

2. That £ T. 5,000 should be appropriated and sent to the Vali of Bitlis to assist the refugees in rebuilding their houses.

3. That barracks should be built in the neighbourhood of Sasun to protect the Armenians against the predatory raids of the Kurds and to check any revolutionary outbreak at the beginning.

4. That a general amnesty should be granted to all those who surrendered and who were not caught in the actual commission of crime.

5. That an efficient gendarmerie should be reorganized in Bitlis and the neighbouring vilayets, and that an inquiry should be held into the mode and system of administration in order to check existing abuses.

The Grand Vizier then proceeded to say that he had been in communication with Zekki Pasha, the Commander-in-chief of the IVth Army Corps, and had impressed upon him the importance of keeping the Hamidieh troops well in hand, as he could not escape

responsibility for any outrages committed by them, and that he had again sent stringent instructions to the Valis of Bitlis, Kharput, Diarbekir, and Erzeroum for the maintenance of public order and the protection of Armenians.

According to the latest reports from the Vali of Bitlis, the number of houses destroyed in the Sasun district (Shattack and Talori) was estimated at 574 houses, of which 49 were stated to be Mussulman and 525 Christian. The cost of reconstruction is estimated at about £ T. 5 (4*l.* 10*s.*) for each house. His Highness was, however, unable to tell me the number of lives lost in the late occurrences; but he had no doubt that full information on this point would shortly reach him, and he would be ready to communicate it to me. It is of great importance to have information on this point in order to understand the actual situation, but I am still without information from Mr. Heathcote, nor have the French or Russian Consuls estimated the numbers in their reports to their Embassies.

His Highness added that he received on the 14th instant a telegram from the Vali of Bitlis (copy of which I inclose) referring to the employment given to the destitute refugees in constructing a road from Moush to Bitlis, and stating that the main object of the insurgents was to provoke intervention by the English and French Consuls.

I have just heard that an Imperial Iradé has been issued sanctioning the decisions come to by the Council of Ministers on Sunday.

I have, &c.
(Signed) N. R. O'CONOR.

Inclosure in No. 69.

Vali of Bitlis to the Grand Vizier.

(Translation.)
(Telegraphic.) *Moush, June* 1 (14), 1904.

IN reply to your telegram of the 30th May (12th June).

My previous reports are supported by documentary evidence of an official character. The work on the road is at a quarter of an-hour's distance from the town and 300 or 400 labourers, all of them Armenians, are daily employed on it and no accident has occurred.

The statements of the Consuls as to people being averse to working on the road on account of the absence of personal safety naturally cannot be attributed to an impartial feeling. The proposal that they should work on the road was made through the Acting Bishop of Moush, and in the reply received it was stated that the reason for their not working was that they were weak and ill.

No one has yet notified a desire to proceed from Van to Geliguzan or elsewhere.

It is proved by the contents of some important documents seized at Geliguzan that their main object was to bring about the intervention of the English and French Consuls.

No. 70.

Sir N. O'Conor to the Marquess of Lansdowne.—(*Received June* 27.)

My Lord, *Therapia, June* 22, 1904.

I HAVE the honour to submit to your Lordship the following summary of the telegraphic correspondence which has passed between the Embassy and His Majesty's Vice-Consul at Moush during the past week, as presented in this form it may assist your Lordship to follow the course of recent events more conveniently.

Mr. Heathcote was informed on the 14th instant that Captain Tyrrell was starting for Van, *en route* to Moush and Geliguzan. He was also told to impress upon the Vali that the persecution of innocent inhabitants was as prejudicial to the real interests of Turkey as to the feelings of humanity, and that it was absolutely necessary that outrages should cease, and that the refugees should be allowed to return home and be properly protected.

Mr. Heathcote replied that he believed that fifty-three refugees desired to return home if their safety was guaranteed. He added that about 600 men had surrendered, but that he thought the majority of them were rather refugees than insurgents; that lack of direct evidence made it impossible to make specific demands against Kurds, and that the

Vali simply assumed the attitude that all the reports rendered by the Consuls were lies, and had endeavoured to extort written declarations from prisoners denying that the troops had burned the villages.

On the 17th instant Mr. Heathcote was told that it was desirable that Captain Tyrrell should follow any military operations being carried out, and that he (Mr. Heathcote) should keep in touch with the Vali, who had been warned by the Grand Vizier that he would be held personally responsible for fresh outrages, and that the Ottoman Government had promised to provide funds for the purpose of rebuilding the houses of Armenians in the Sasun district which had been destroyed.

On the same day Mr. Heathcote telegraphed that the excesses complained of by the Consuls were:—

1. Single murders.
2. Kurdish raid.
3. Brutalities committed by troops and gendarmes during their search for arms in the villages or for insurgents in the plains, and their destruction of houses.

Mr. Heathcote added that the Turkish authorities maintained that the hardships complained of were a necessary result of the rebellion and provocation of insurgents, and reported a conversation with the Vali, whose attitude had somewhat changed consequent upon a rebuke received from Constantinople. He also reported that the French Consul's life had been threatened, according to rumours prevalent among low Mussulmans.

To this telegram a reply was sent that it would be only possible to secure punishment of guilty parties if precise details as to place, nature of outrages, number of victims, persons implicated, &c., were furnished, and it was impressed upon him that the main points for the present was to put a stop to the continuance of outrages. Mr. Heathcote was at the same time asked if he had any proof that Kurds had taken part in the outrages.

Mr. Heathcote reported on the same day that the Armenian insurgents had presented five conditions to the French Consul, including permission for them to return to their homes under a guarantee of security by the Great Powers; the rebuilding of their houses and churches; the restoration to them of all property and live-stock stolen from them; a prohibition of nomad Kurds coming into the district; and that, seeing the danger caused to women principally by the presence of licentious soldiery, that no barracks should be built.

On the 18th Mr. Heathcote reported a marked improvement in the Vali's attitude, due, he supposed, to the pressure brought to bear by the Embassy at Constantinople.

On the following day he telegraphed that the Porte had sent orders that, in consequence of reported threats against the life of the French Consul, armed escorts were to accompany the Consuls when they left the town, a measure which would make it impossible to conduct all useful inquiry in future. He also reported that the Vali had received a telegraphic Iradé direct from the Palace, ordering the refugees to settle in the plain, which would be in direct contradiction to the promise given to the Embassy that funds should be provided for the rebuilding of houses. Mr. Heathcote stated in the same telegram that he had no proof of participation of Kurds in recent events.

On the 19th June Mr. Heathcote was instructed to inform Captain Tyrrell that the Porte had been held responsible for his safety, and that, as they would consequently insist upon his being accompanied by a large escort, which would limit his freedom of action, he should endeavour to attach himself to any body of troops operating in the field, and not proceed into the mountain districts without consulting the Consuls as to the safety of doing so.

On the 21st Mr. Heathcote telegraphed that a fight had occurred two days previously at Derkevank, a short hour east of Moush, and that he and the Russian Consul arrived there at 2 P.M., and were joined later by Captain Tyrrell. Villagers said gendarmes attacked, whereas gendarmes stated the opposite. One wounded insurgent, who said that he was a Russian non-commissioned officer, was found among villagers. Consuls saw eight corpses and three wounded, and believed that there were more in the fields. They also disbelieved the statement of the authorities that they were armed when killed, and they hold Infantry Colonel Yaver and Colonel of Gendarmerie Izzet responsible for killing innocent villagers.

I have, &c.
(Signed) N. R. O'CONOR.

No. 71.

The Marquess of Lansdowne to Sir N. O'Conor.

Sir, *Foreign Office, June* 29, 1904.

THE Turkish Ambassador made a communication to me to-day to the following effect:—

The gravity of the misdeeds committed by Armenian agitators in certain parts of Anatolia had, perhaps, hardly been properly realized, and it would be impossible to praise too highly the spirit of generosity shown by the Turkish Government, from the beginning, in the task of repression.

The actual facts were as follows: The insurrectionary movement had been prepared long beforehand by the Hentchakist and other Armenian revolutionary Committees working abroad, and was in no way due to the pretended abuses in the Ottoman Administration, as certain detractors of the Turkish Government would have it to be believed.

The Committee had indeed planned last year to send emissaries to Sasun and to Talori with the mission of stirring up the peaceful population, and committing acts of pillage, murder, and incendiarism, in order that these misdeeds should subsequently be ascribed to the Mussulmans, and public opinion should thus be roused against the Turkish Government. The documents seized upon the persons of the rebels left no room for doubt on this head.

The Ottoman Government, warned in time of these criminal projects, sent good advice to the Armenians in the localities affected through the Armenian Patriarch, and at the same time instructed the Imperial authorities to warn them against the machinations of the revolutionists, which could only cause their ruin. Unhappily these methods of persuasion did not attain their object: certain Armenian agitators, who came to Sasun and Talori from Russia and Persia, succeeded in gathering some followers and in committing the misdeeds which had been recorded in the press. The Turkish Government would have been within their rights in acting with rigorous severity, but, actuated by a lively desire to prevent the effusion of blood, they had wished first to exhaust every means of conciliation. They had dispatched Armenian notables, with a priest at their head, to the rebels, in order to bring them to reason and to promise them pardon if they made their submission.

Once again these wise counsels failed to produce the desired effect. The rebels, kept in a state of perpetual excitement by the principal agitators, rejected the advice proffered, and it was only after they had made an armed attack upon the Imperial troops that the latter were obliged to retaliate. Thanks to the measures adopted, order and tranquillity had now been restored.

The Ottoman Government, paternally solicitous for the welfare of the Armenian population, had proclaimed a general amnesty. They had given orders that the houses destroyed by the rebels should be rebuilt; that the necessary measures should be adopted to reinstate the refugees without delay, and to provide them with food and seed; that those who desired to work, in order to obtain money for their subsistence, should be employed on road construction; and that guard-houses should be erected to lodge the troops charged with assuring public security. The refugees who desired to return to their villages would be left in freedom. But it should of course be clearly understood that rebels taken with arms in their hands would be excepted from the general amnesty and brought to justice.

His Excellency added that a wide publicity would be given to the details of the judicial proceedings, in order that public opinion should be edified as to the true causes of the recent disorders and the organization of the revolutionary movement.

I am, &c.

(Signed) LANSDOWNE.

No. 72.

The Marquess of Lansdowne to Sir N. O'Conor.

Sir, *Foreign Office, June* 30, 1904.

I HAVE received your Excellency's despatch of the 21st instant, reporting the decisions which have been arrived at by the Council of Ministers and sanctioned by Imperial Iradé with a view to alleviating distress and restoring order in Armenia.

I have learnt with satisfaction the successful result of the representations which your Excellency has made on this subject to theTurkish Government.

I am, &c.
(Signed) LANSDOWNE.

No. 73.

Sir N. O'Conor to the Marquess of Lansdowne.—(Received July 4.)

My Lord, *Therapia, June 25, 1904.*

AT the end of an audience which I had with the Sultan yesterday, His Majesty expressed the hope that I should not believe the false reports circulated in the European press in regard to recent events in Armenia.

The Sultan went on to say that all the troubles and disturbances in the Sasun district had been caused by numerous bands of insurgents crossing the frontier with the declared intention of provoking insurrection.

In order to limit, as far as possible, the effusion of blood, a large military force of regular troops had been concentrated around Moush and sent against the revolutionaries.

He had given the most positive orders and done all in his power to prevent outrages and massacres of the innocent inhabitants, and he hoped I would report in this sense to my Government.

I replied that the reports from our Consul at Moush, who was acting in co-operation with his French and Russian colleagues, were incomplete as to what really had taken place, but that the presence there of some 3,000 destitute refugees and the destruction of over 500 Armenian houses were altogether inexplicable, and, I very much feared, pointed to the perpetration of grave and brutal excesses. I was unwilling to believe that the regular army had committed such acts, and if they were committed by the Kurds, while such a large military force was in the field, the crime was aggravated. I had heard reports of outrages and atrocities which I sincerely hoped were not true, but they caused anxiety, and I did not hesitate to mention them to His Majesty. Nothing could be more detrimental to His Majesty and the security of his Empire than a repetition of massacre and outrages in Armenia. I would not answer for the consequences of the indignation it would create throughout Europe, as well as in Macedonia, where the Powers were now striving to introduce reforms. It was in His Majesty's interest to prove, in some striking manner, that he would not tolerate outrages upon his Armenian subjects, who would be his most loyal subjects from the day they were guaranteed security of life and property, and I believed he could only attain this end by inflicting the utmost vigour of the law upon any Kurdish Agas who were caught pillaging and murdering, and doing it in such a way that all Kurdistan knew of it.

The Sultan said that the stories I had heard were grossly exaggerated, and that the policy of the revolutionary Committees was to circulate these mendacious reports throughout Europe. He did not deny that many lives had been lost on the side both of the soldiers and the insurgents, and probably some innocent persons who had been forced to take up arms by the insurgents who had crossed the frontier had been killed, but he had given the most stringent orders not to allow the Kurds to approach the theatre of the disturbances, and he was confident that his orders had been obeyed. His Majesty believed that the Consular Reports would ultimately prove that his statements were correct.

I have, &c.
(Signed) N. R. O'CONOR.

No. 74.

Sir N. O'Conor to the Marquess of Lansdowne.—(Received July 4.)

My Lord, *Constantinople, June 28, 1904.*

I HAVE the honour to forward to your Lordship herewith a Memorandum from Mr. Lamb, First Dragoman of His Majesty's Embassy, communicating telegrams received

by the Sublime Porte from the Vali of Bitlis, respecting the capture, at the village of Derkevank, near Moush, of a certain Kirkor, described as a Russian Lieutenant.

I have, &c.
(Signed) N. R. O'CONOR.

Inclosure 1 in No. 74.

Memorandum by Mr. Lamb.

I HAVE the honour to submit herewith a translation of a telegram from the Vali of Bitlis, dated the 19th instant, reporting the capture of a certain Kirkor at the village of Derkevank, near Moush.

In a further telegram received to-day, this person is described as a Russian Lieutenant.

The Vali also reports that the search-parties operating in the Geliguzan Valley have unearthed fourty-four more Mauser and other rifles secreted by the insurgents. The number of those discovered up to the present time is estimated at 1,500.

(Signed) HARRY H. LAMB.

June 21, 1904.

Inclosure 2 in No. 74.

Telegram from the Vali of Bitlis, dated June 6 (19), 1904.

(Translation.)

NEWS having been brought that the insurgent leaders Andronik and Kevork were at the village of Aharindj, situated at the foot of the mountains over against the town of Moush, after consultation, the Alai Bey (Izzet Bey), together with Colonel Yaver Bey, of the regular army, and certain officials, surrounded that village last night, and proceeded to search it at daybreak to-day.

Failing to discover the insurgents, they were on the way back, and had arrived in front of the village of Derkevank, which lies nearer to Moush, when some twenty rifle shots were fired on them by insurgents, who had taken up a position there. In the return fire eleven insurgents were killed, and in the subsequent search a Russian revolutionary named Kirkor Azarian Mirzabkoff [*sic*], with two native servants, was captured in a room. On the report of this, these persons were sent for, and Kirkor, who was wounded, was separately confined in the military hospital, where he was examined until nearly 10 o'clock this evening in the presence of the judicial authorities, of Jelal Pasha, the Acting Commandant of Moush, the above-mentioned Yaver Bey, and others. As his statements explain, the seditious documents which were seized at Geliguzan and elsewhere, and which have been translated, shed light on the real circumstances of this mountain insurrection; they are being elucidated, and investigations are at the present moment being conducted on the spot, the results of which, together with the details of the affair, shall be fully reported.

No. 75.

Sir N. O'Conor to the Marquess of Lansdowne.—(Received July 4.)

My Lord, *Therapia, June* 28, 1904.

THE reports I have received up to date from Mr. Heathcote leave me still in doubt as to what has exactly taken place in the mountainous districts of Sasun and Talori.

I learnt, however, from the Russian Chargé d'Affaires yesterday morning—and the information was subsequently confirmed by the Grand Vizier—that 4,500 refugees had left Moush for Sasun accompanied by several Turkish officials, and that a

Commission had been formed to supervise their re-establishment in their homes. M. Swetchine and I agreed that it would be desirable that some prominent members of the Armenian community should be appointed on the Commission, and upon my proposing it later in the day to the Grand Vizier, his Highness at once telegraphed to the Vali to invite the assistance of two or three Armenian Notables.

In reply to my remonstrances at the want of attention paid by the Vali to the requests of the Consul and to the absence of any check to the brutal proceedings of he Kurds and gendarmes against innocent Armenians, as reported by Mr. Heathcote n general terms, his Highness again requested me to ask for definite information as 'o persons, place, and date. It was impossible for him to take up complaints framed n such vague terms as were sent by Mr. Heathcote, but he promised to make the strictest inquiry into any cases which were sufficiently definite and precise as to enable him to send categorical instructions to the local authorities. His Highness added that no doubt Captain Tyrrell would send me a full report on recent occurrences, as he understood he had gone to Sasun with the Military Commandant, Salih Pasha. The Captain would also have an opportunity of seeing how the work of re-establishing the refugees in their homes was being carried out. Money had been sent from the surrounding vilayets to the Vali of Bitlis, who had now some 5,000 liras at his disposal.

We shall, I hope, ere long be in a position to form a correct judgment as to whether the insurgents or the troops or the Kurds are responsible for the extensive devastation and ruin which have undoubtedly marked recent operations in the Sasun district, as also to learn how far this destruction of property has been accompanied by massacre and outrages.

I have, &c.
(Signed) N. R. O'CONOR.

No. 76.

Sir N. O'Conor to the Marquess of Lansdowne.—(*Received July* 4.)

My Lord, *Therapia, June* 28, 1904.

I HAVE the honour to report to your Lordship that I communicated to M. Swetchine on the 26th instant the substance of Mr. Shipley's despatch from Erzeroum, stating that forty-five insurgents had appeared close to the frontier, of whom thirty-seven were killed, that casualties occurred also on the side of the Turkish soldiers, and that, moreover, 300 insurgents were said to be in hiding close to the Russian frontier.

I took the opportunity to point out to M. Swetchine the unfavourable impression that would be created in Europe by the constant passage of insurgents across the frontier, and I expressed the hope that the Governor-General of the Caucasus would be instructed to keep a very sharp look-out, and to prevent these bands entering Turkey.

M. Swetchine replied that the earnest attention of Prince Galitzin had already been called to this matter by the Embassy, and that the Prince had replied that the frontier was long and difficult to guard, and that he was doing all he could to prevent insurgents crossing it.

I have, &c.
(Signed) N. R. O'CONOR.

No. 77.

Sir N. O'Conor to the Marquess of Lansdowne.—(*Received July* 7.)

(Telegraphic.) *Therapia, July* 7, 1904.

ACCORDING to a telegram, dispatched by Mr. Heathcote from Moush, vilayet is undisturbed and return of the refugees to the mountains is proceeding satisfactorily.

No. 78.

The Marquess of Lansdowne to Sir N. O'Conor.

(Telegraphic.) *Foreign Office, July* 7, 1904.

HAVE you heard, anything of a report, which has reached the Pro-Armenian Committee by telegram, to the effect that Kurds and regular troops are attacking and killing Armenian travellers in the neighbourhood of Van, on the ground of their being insurgents, and that this is the beginning of a general massacre in the province?

No. 79.

The Marquess of Lansdowne to Sir N. O'Conor.

Sir, *Foreign Office, July* 8, 1904.

I HAVE received your Excellency's despatch of the 25th ultimo, reporting a conversation which you had with the Sultan on the subject of recent events in Armenia.

The language which you held to His Imperial Majesty on that occasion has my approval.

I am, &c.
(Signed) LANSDOWNE.

No. 80.

Sir N. O'Conor to the Marquess of Lansdowne.—(Received July 11.)

My Lord, *Therapia, July* 4, 1904.

I HAVE the honour to transmit to your Lordship herewith extract of a despatch from His Majesty's Vice-Consul at Bitlis, who is still at Moush, reporting upon the present situation at that place, and containing an account of the fight which took place at Derkevank, a village about 3 miles from Moush, on the 19th ultimo, resulting in the deaths of several villagers and in the capture of one wounded insurgent, who stated that he was a Russian non-commissioned officer.

In connection with that portion of Mr. Heathcote's despatch in which he gives a list of the demands of the Sasun refugees, it may be as well to state that Mr. Heathcote would not appear to have fully grasped the meaning of the instructions sent to him, and which were duly reported to your Lordship in my despatch of the 14th ultimo. What I desired to ascertain was the nature of the representations and demands which he and his colleagues had addressed to the Turkish officials. It would obviously be beyond my power to satisfy the mere wishes of the inhabitants of Sasun such as he describes them.

I think that it may safely be assumed from the general drift of Mr. Heathcote's present despatch that the Grand Vizier has kept the promises made to me, as reported to your Lordship from time to time in previous despatches, and that up to the present no evidence is forthcoming to show that the Kurds have interfered. It may also, I think, be inferred that the recent trouble has been caused by an insurrectionary movement which has had its origin from outside the Turkish dominions, though planned and executed by refugees from Turkey.

I have, &c.
(Signed) N. R. O'CONOR.

Inclosure in No. 80.

Vice-Consul Heathcote to Sir N. O'Conor.

(Extract.) *Moush, June* 22, 1904.

I HAVE the honour to report that on the 16th instant I had a long conversation with the Vali with regard to the present condition of the province, and the necessity of putting a stop to the excesses daily reported to me.

Owing to the difficulty of obtaining trustworthy information, or any actual evidence to bring before a Court or even the administrative authorities, I have been obliged to lay the most stress on some of the less important cases reported to me, but such cases may have their value as tests of the good or bad faith of the Vali and his officials.

The following are, so far, the visible results of the Vali's change of attitude:—

(*a.*) The distribution of bread to the refugees, which had been very irregular and insufficient, has been greatly improved.

(*b.*) A certain Kasim, accused of murdering the priest of the large Catholic village of Frenk Norshen, has been imprisoned.

(*c.*) A second inquiry has been ordered into the affair at Arakh mentioned in my last despatch, the Governor-General admitting that the first official report cannot be regarded as finally proved.

(*d.*) No buildings were burnt in the fight at Derkevank to which I refer below.

On the same day M. Robin informed Ferid Bey that he heard of threats against his life among the lower class of Moslems, and of a belief that his assassination would be welcome to the Government. The instructions which he obtained in consequence of his report on this to Constantinople, and which he received during one of our visits with evident satisfaction, ordering him to see that we were always escorted by gendarmes while outside Moush, will render it difficult to verify reports and complaints from villagers.

Your Excellency has called on me for information as to the wishes of the Sasun refugees. On the 17th a deputation of them visited the French Consul, and they have also informed us in writing of their desires. These statements confirm my belief, which I have already reported, that with one or two exceptions they, like all mountaineers, are most unwilling to leave their homes even for better lands in the plain.

Their wishes, expressed in the form of demands, though as suppliant fugitives they are in no position to adopt this tone, are as follows:—

They claim the guarantee of the Great Powers for five points—

1. That they should be restored to their old homes in the mountains with full provision for the maintenance of order;

2. That their houses and churches should be rebuilt;

3. That the cattle and other property stolen should be restored;

4. That the nomad Kurdish tribes should be forbidden to enter their districts; and

5. That no barracks should be erected among them, on account of the misconduct to be expected from the soldiers, especially towards their women, who are obliged by their work to be often alone in the fields and on the hill-sides.

In case it should be finally decided to restore them to their homes, though this now seems improbable, I would remark that, unless some steps are taken in the direction of the second and third points, they would have the greatest difficulty in maintaining life. The fourth point has often been raised, and is essential to the real tranquillity of any Armenian population in Sasun; but its attainment seems difficult, as the tribes have visited the mountains for generations, perhaps for centuries, and cannot remain in the plains of Diarbekir after the pasturage is exhausted. The establishment of military centres and posts, if properly conducted, should reduce the dangers attending their arrival. The fifth point appears to me absurd. The Government can only secure order, in accordance with point 1, by this measure, and opposition to it is bound to give the authorities the idea that the villagers wish to recommence their revolutionary agitation on the first opportunity.

When the Public Prosecutor called on me, as reported last week, he stated that measures were already being taken for the establishment of two barracks and four permanent posts in the mountains.

He also told me that the Government had ordered the Vali to offer to the refugees the choice of returning home or accepting new land in the plain, and this was confirmed by the Governor in the long interview reported above. On the 17th your Excellency was so good as to inform me that the Porte promised to supply the money necessary for the rebuilding of the houses, in case of their accepting the first of these offers

In view of the divergence between the demands of the refugees and the Vali's statements that most of them desired to be established in the plain, I suspect that some pressure was applied to induce the people to give this answer, and that, when that failed, the Central Government was persuaded to order the adoption of that

course. However this may be, when I saw the Vali on the 18th, he produced a telegram, which I think, from words used by him, must have reached him before our former meeting, and which was almost certainly dispatched before the promise of funds for rebuilding was made to your Excellency.

He said that this telegram was an Iradé, dated the 15th, coming direct from the Palace, and ordering that the refugees and surrendered insurgents should be established in the plain, and steps are now being taken to execute this order.

Whatever decision may finally be taken by His Majesty the Sultan, I would submit that it is of pressing importance to settle this question without delay. It is still possible, if seed can be provided, to raise a crop of millet, but if much time elapses the people will be in danger of starvation unless the Government distribution of bread is continued, and once they are in the villages, I should have no hope of this.

On Sunday, the 19th, at 1 o'clock we heard that fighting was going on at Derkevank, a village 3 miles from Moush on the road to Bitlis and at the foot of the hills. The Russian Consul and I started at once, in view of your Excellency's instructions to me, which I had made known to him. M. Robin was prevented from accompanying us by a slight indisposition.

When we arrived we found about 200 infantry, a small body of cavalry, and many gendarmes, most of whom were preparing to return to Moush.

The villagers say that the gendarmes attacked them first, while the account given by the officials is that they had dismounted to rest at the fountain, which is near the road below the village, when they were fired on from among the houses and from the hill above.

There is no doubt that there was at least one real insurgent in Derkevank, a wounded man, who had been hidden there for some days; he was captured and brought to hospital in Moush, and, according to the Vali, he has declared himself to be an officer of Russian reserves.

We saw eight corpses and two wounded men and one young boy, all of whom were identified by their relatives as villagers; and though the officials assert that they were armed, we think this is false, and that they were merely trying to escape into the fields for safety.

Fourteen bodies were buried yesterday, including four natives of the neighbouring village of Arakh.

Captain Tyrrell, His Majesty's Vice-Consul at Van, joined us at the village when he reached it on his road from Van to Moush. He concurs with me and M. Chirkoff in thinking that the officers commanding the troops and gendarmes were responsible for allowing innocent villagers to be killed.

These officers were Mir Alai Yaver Bey, Colonel of Infantry (32nd Regiment), and Izzet Bey, the Colonel (Alai Bey) of the Bitlis Gendarmerie. As regards the former, it must be admitted that, according to some accounts, the regular troops did not arrive till the fighting was over, and, in that case, the whole responsibility falls on Izzet Bey, whose dismissal I should urge were it not that the Colonel of the Moush gendarmes and the Major at Bitlis, one of whom would presumably succeed him for a time, have an even worse reputation. Constant complaints are made against him, but I have no positive evidence of the misdeeds attributed to him.

Whether there were, or were not, any other insurgents come from the mountains besides the alleged Russian, none were killed or captured, and so far nothing in the nature of evidence has been produced to show that the official version is correct.

There was no burning of houses and no plunder by Kurds, though the villagers accuse the gendarmes of looting, and the Vali, whom we saw sitting at the entrance to Moush, says that he ordered the arrest of several natives of the town who were hurrying out armed in order to take part in what might be going on.

Be this as it may, the Moslems of Moush did not go to Derkevank, as they went to Mogunk when it was destroyed two years ago.

No. 81.

Sir N. O'Conor to the Marquess of Lansdowne.—(*Received July* 11.)

My Lord, *Therapia, July* 4, 1904.

WITH reference to the recent despatches which I have addressed to your Lordship upon the subject of the Armenian revolutionary movement, I have the honour to transmit herewith copies of two despatches from His Majesty's Vice-Consul at Van, reporting upon a fight in the neighbourhood of Arjish which would appear to have resulted in the complete annihilation of a small band of thirty Armenian revolutionaries by Turkish gendarmes, assisted by Zilan Kurds.

Your Lordship will perceive that Captain Tyrrell reports in his earlier despatch that, in addition to the thirty men killed at Arjish, seven armed revolutionaries, of whom three were Turkish military deserters have been captured in Karchikan, and that he is of opinion, after sifting all the information he has been able to procure, that all these men formed part of the same band of refugees who had fled from the Sasun district.

He also states that the local officials believe these men to have come originally from Bulgaria, and says that their behaviour in allowing themselves to be led into a trap by a Kurdish guide would seem to show that they were not natives of the country.

I am authorizing Captain Tyrrell, in answer to the inquiry contained in the last paragraph of his later despatch, to proceed at once and without waiting for permission from the Embassy to any place where an incident like the affair at Arjish may seem to call for his presence.

I have, &c.
(Signed) N. R. O'CONOR.

Inclosure 1 in No. 81.

Vice-Consul Tyrrell to Sir N. O'Conor.

Sir, *Van, June* 10, 1904.

I HAVE the honour to report another affair, in which it seems that a band of thirty Armenian revolutionists has been wiped out.

This occurred in the hills north-east of Arjish, between that place and the Tujji Yaila.

As soon as the news was received in Van that this band had been located, and was being held by the Zilan Kurds. the Alai Bey left, with a small force of gendarmerie. These restored confidence at Arjish, where the threatening behaviour of the Kurds had caused some apprehension; and then, with some soldiers, proceeded to the spot where the revolutionists, surrounded, were defending themselves.

I have seen the telegraphic report sent by the Alai Bey to the Vali, giving an account of the matter. According to this, all the thirty revolutionists were killed, after having refused terms of surrender. It seems that the Kurds lost about an equal number, while one soldiers was killed, and two wounded. The band was apparently at bay in a cave, and by some mischance, some dynamite which they had with them, exploded, killing fourteen of them, as well as six Kurds who were trying to get at them from above.

Such of their rifles and other belongings as escaped the effects of this explosion, are described in the Alai Bey's report; and there is a banner inscribed "Ya ulum ya azad" —death or freedom.

I hope to see these things in a few days when the Alai Bey returns to Van.

About the same time that the news of this band reached Van, seven armed revolutionists were captured in Karchikan. Of these, three were Turkish soldiers, deserters, one being a sergeant-trumpeter. These seven men are now in prison in Van. Towards the end of May a band had landed on the Island of Charpanakh (Gudutz), in the lake. Soldiers were sent out there, but, as usual, arrived after the revolutionists had left. The statements of "eye-witnesses," in recounting the descent of this band upon the island, differ, in estimating its numbers, between fifteen and forty. The revolutionists passed the night there, picketing the monastery, so as to allow no one to go out, and keeping all the boatmen prisoners. They represented

that they had come from Sasun, that there had been no fighting there, but only in Mush Plain. They said that they had killed 300 soldiers, but that their own losses were insignificant; also that among the revolutionists are many Turkish soldiers who have deserted. From the examination of the seven men taken in Karchikan, it seems that both they, and those who were killed north of Arjish, were of this band. They crossed from Charpanakh to Arjish, where they divided, the larger part going north, and meeting their fate as described above, and these seven crossing to the south shore.

There are vague reports among the Armenians of other bands being in various parts of the vilayet. But I think these reports spring from the habit the Armenians here have of exaggerating and of frightening themselves unnecessarily. The Government seems to know nothing of them, and the only report to which I am inclined to assign a basis of fact is the one that says there is a small band in the Shattakh district, consisting of revolutionists who had been hiding in Van itself.

There is much conflicting opinion as to whence these bands come. While some say that they are fresh from Russia, and that more are continually crossing; others put them all down as refugees from Sasun. I think the latter supposition is the more probable, and it would certainly seem to have been the case in regard to the band whose destruction I have reported. It ought, too, to be no easy matter for revolutionists, armed and well supplied as these bands generally are, to cross the frontier, and wander across the country to Van; but then the police is so undermanned and inefficient, that one could not be altogether surprised at this happening. The officials believe that the particular band which has formed the subject of this despatch consisted of men from Bulgaria, and that it had originally come in connection with some Macedonian revolutionary Committee. At all events, it would seem not to have contained men of this locality, for men who know the country round here would never have allowed themselves to be led, by a Kurdish guide, as these were, into a *cul-de-sac* from which there was no escape.

In Van itself I think the general situation has improved since I reported on it early in April. The Vali has shown that he intends to keep the Kurds well in hand, as also the soldiers and zaptiehs employed on the occasions of these affrays; and at present the authorities, civil and military, seem to me to be acting coolly and correctly, and to have no intention of allowing disturbances to arise.

I have, &c.

(Signed) G. E. TYRRELL,
Captain.

Inclosure 2 in No. 81.

Vice Consul Tyrrell to Sir N. O'Conor.

Sir, *Van, June* 14, 1904.

WITH reference to my despatch of the 10th June, I have the honour to report that I have had a conversation with the Alai Bey and seen the articles which had belonged to the revolutionary band, which he had collected and brought into Van.

These are not of much importance. Among them is a silk banner, bearing on one side the figures 1904 and the words "Tashnag Society," in Armenian characters; and on the other a device, with the motto, also in Armenian, "Death or Freedom." Another piece of embroidered silk, apparently for a pendant of some sort, has the words, "A.R.F. Committee, 1890." There are six medallions, two of which bear the portrait of Sirop.

There are three spherical iron balls, supposed to be dynamite bombs, and a very good Kodak camera of the most recent type.

Only two old rifles have been brought in, the rest having been given to the Kurds as a reward for their action in the affair. The cartridges are of Russian make. There are a good many papers, but these have not yet been examined.

The statements of the Alai Bey bear out the particulars reported in my above-mentioned despatch.

At the same time, it must be said that there is now a different version from Armenian sources. According to this, there were only nineteen revolutionists, of whom seven escaped into Abagha, the balance of the thirty corpses being those of villagers killed by the Kurds. There may be some truth in this, but, on the whole, as far as one can judge, I think the balance of fact is on the side of the official report. Whether

any villagers were killed or not, I am pretty certain that, in this case, no revolutionists escaped.

As it is practically impossible to get at the whole truth of these affairs, and to know exactly what has happened, without being on the spot oneself, I should like to ask your Excellency to allow me to go out myself, in future, as soon as news of similar occurrences are received, and without waiting for a formal sanction in each case, for, unless I could start immediately, it would not be of much use going at all. I should not leave Van if I thought, at the time, that my presence was needed here. Besides the advantage of seeing with my own eyes, and having all information at first hand, the fact of a Consul being present, or even expected, would tend to prevent harshness towards inoffensive villagers and to restrain the Kurds.

In connection with the Arjish affair there were evidently good grounds for the apprehension which I mentioned as having existed there before the arrival of the Alai Bey. The Kurds were on the point of attacking the place and looting the bazaar.

I have, &c.
(Signed) G. E. TYRRELL,
Captain.

No. 82.

Sir N. O'Conor to the Marquess of Lansdowne.—(Received July 11.)

My Lord, *Therapia, July 5, 1904.*

I TRANSMIT herewith an extract of a despatch from His Majesty's Acting Consul at Erzeroum, reporting a severe fight between a band of insurgents and the Imperial troops in the neighbourhood of Kuteh.

The band, who had, shortly before, crossed the Russian frontier, apparently without any impediment on the part of the military guard, were almost exterminated by the Turks, and only three survived and recrossed the frontier.

I have, &c.
(Signed) N. R. O'CONOR.

Inclosure in No. 82.

Acting Consul Shipley to Sir N. O'Conor.

(Extract.) *Erzeroum, June 24, 1904.*

I HAVE the honour to submit the following Report on a trip to the frontier which I made with the French Dragoman Acting Vice-Consul, who was going to meet his chief returning from leave of absence.

My primary object was to talk over several cases of Kurdish oppression of Armenian villagers with Ahmed Pasha, Commander of the frontier, and with Halil Effendi, Commandant of the troops at Kuteh.

I am glad to say I was successful in causing drastic measures to be taken in two cases which had dragged on for several weeks.

A very short time after our arrival at Kuteh on Sunday evening, a man came in from Mejingird, a village an hour and a-half distant up the line, with the news that heavy firing was going on, and soon afterwards the bugle sounded for reinforcements.

The garrison at Kuteh consisted till lately of some three squadrons of cavalry, but was joined some six weeks ago by the 4th Battalion of the 26th Regiment (Bimbashi Khouloussi Bey) which is dispersed in the different frontier villages of the Passin and Namrivan Kaïmakamliks. The system of patrols on the line is bad, or rather there is no system nor any co-operation between the Turks and the Russians. The latter have patrols of about twenty, covering a distance of 2 kilom., one each side of a fixed centre. The former have patrols of fifteen men and an officer, covering some 5 kilom., with no centre or time limit. The consequence is that not only do the patrols each side of the line not cover half the ground they might do, but the Turkish patrols frequently overlap each other, leaving whole kilometres uncovered.

Halil Effendi answered the summons for reinforcements at once with all the

troops in the immediate vicinity, some 120 men, foot and horse. He was back, however, in a short time with the news that the patrol had let the band slip through and lost track of it. The Armenians, most of whom were mounted, seem to have treated the fire of the Turks with supreme contempt, returning it but never stopping or diverging from their route.

The firing had, however, roused the two neighbouring villages, both of them inhabited by Reshid Bey's Hamidiehs. This forced the band to make a long détour, and prevented its getting to Zanzac, a mixed village of some fifty houses, four-fifths Armenian, which, I have very little doubt from what I heard from Armenians at Karaourgan, the Russian frontier post, the band wished to reach, and if possible destroy, trusting to the press to attribute the deed to the Kurds.

Cut off as it was from the main road and from retreat, and hemmed in by Moslem villages, with men and beasts tired out, the band stopped and took up a very strong position, about one hour and a-half's direct ride from Kuteh, on the three highest peaks of the Zevin Valley.

In the meantime villagers had discovered their tracks and the troops were quickly on the road. Cavalry reinforcements were sent from as far as Azap, three hours distant, and made up a total of 120 soldiers, of whom some 80 were infantry. The fight lasted twelve hours, and the infantry charged on five distinct occasions, showing great courage. Halil Effendi, himself a cavalry man, admitted that they did far better work than his own troops.

It was the latter, however, who finally put the band to rout by taking them unexpectedly in the rear.

The Armenians fought with desperate courage to the end, making some good shooting at long range, but completely losing their heads at the last attack. One officer told me it was pitiful to see the men wildly emptying their magazines at the soldiers without taking any kind of aim and at the last moment picking up turf and stones to throw at them. No quarter was given, nor could I discover that any was asked.

The affair made a deep impression on both the troops and the population. Among the officers I could discover no trace of bitterness against the unfortunate men who had so uselessly sacrificed their lives, but among them and among the Turks in the neighbouring villages I heard nothing but imprecations against a Government which had driven the Armenians to such a pass.

One old Turk said to me, with tears in his eyes: "We lived so quietly together before. Now they let the Kurds ruin both them and us. They were so young and strong, and they made such a hopeless effort."

The number of which the band was composed is uncertain. But forty-five is probably correct. Thirty-three were killed on the hill and in the neighbouring valleys or water-courses, four were found dead yesterday morning on the frontier, five were captured severely wounded on Tuesday near the River Araxes, and three escaped back to Russia. The population maintains that some got through into the Plain of Passin, but I doubt it.

The Turks lost one officer killed, and the Major commanding the infantry battalion wounded, probably fatally; four men killed, another officer and some fifteen wounded, of whom two will probably succumb.

The Kurds inhabiting a small village, Asba Horom, at about 2 kilom. distance from the hill occupied by the band, amused themselves by firing off their rifles in that direction. They received an unexpected and unwelcome response, which cost them three in killed and seven in wounded. Otherwise the Kurds were held severely in check, and Reshid Bey's Hamidiehs would not have come, I believe, even if they had been called, so anxious were they for the safety of their own villages.

A regrettable feature was the slaughter of some thirty horses, which had been left by the Fedaï in a very much exposed place. Only three were saved, two of them being very fine animals.

The troops must have fired an enormous number of rounds, unless they sold some of their cartridges to the villagers; 16,000 were served out to the infantry alone, and from hearsay I should judge that 30,000 were blazed away. Certainly none came back to Kuteh.

The Fedaï were also well provided. After firing recklessly for twelve hours they still had a great quantity in reserve. A large number of dynamite bombs were thrown, damaging only one soldier, a sergeant, whose leg was blown away. They also carried dynamite in packets.

I unfortunately did not consider myself justified in assisting at the fight on Monday. Halil Effendi received orders to dissuade me, if possible, but if I insisted he was to

give me an escort of a strength which would have seriously diminished the fighting force.

The French Dragoman and I walked over the ground, however, next day, and it was fairly clear that had not the Armenians been exhausted by their long night march, nor made the initial mistake, born, I think, of their desire to fight and die together, of concentrating at the approach of the troops on the main peak and leaving some rocks three-quarters the way up unoccupied, thus affording the troops invaluable shelter, the losses of these latter would have been infinitely greater, and most of the band might have escaped at nightfall.

The long-range shooting of the soldiers must have been fairly bad; of the forty or forty-five Armenians composing the band, only three were killed on the summit, the rest being shot at very close quarters when they broke.

The troops sustained all their losses, on the other hand, while trying to reach the rocks mentioned above.

The burying of the corpses was done most improperly, and I made very strong representations on the subject to Ahmed Pasha, who promised to issue the necessary orders.

We saw seven to bury which no attempt had been made, and others were all more or less above ground. They were all naked, and one, I regret to say, had been mutilated in the manner usually attributed to the Moslem Bashi-Bozouks, as also to the Bulgarian Komitajis. Both the stripping and the mutilation of the corpses was the work of the Kurds.

Large bands are reported in the woods in the neighbourhood of Kuteh, and troops, to the number of 500, have been hurried up from all sides.

The country through which I passed struck me, on my way to Kuteh, as being perfectly quiet. The villagers, both Turkish and Armenian, appeared to be satisfied that the local Government was really trying to keep a check on the Kurds, and the presence of the troops, against whom I heard no complaints, has had a very reassuring effect.

On the way back I found, of course, considerable anxiety, owing to the withdrawal of the troops from the villages; but in every case it was not so much from the Armenian revolutionaries as from the Kurds that the Turks feared trouble. The troops have, however, I believe, been replaced by now, and I do not think that, even if fresh bands cross, they will seriously affect the tranquillity of the country.

No. 83.

Sir N. O'Conor to the Marquess of Lansdowne.—(*Received July* 11.)

My Lord, *Therapia, July* 6, 1904.

I HAVE the honour to transmit to your Lordship herewith copy of a despatch from the Acting Consul at Erzeroum reporting that an arrangement has been made between the Turkish and Russian Governments by which any one, Christian or Moslem, provided with a "carte d'identité" can enter Turkey from the Caucasus and return thither without any time-limit being fixed.

Mr. Shipley adds that the old system remains in force as far as the Turkish side of the frontier is concerned.

I have, &c.
(Signed) N. R. O'CONOR.

Inclosure in No. 83.

Acting Consul Shipley to Sir N. O'Conor.

Sir, *Erzeroum, June* 24, 1904.

I HAVE the honour to report that by a new arrangement between the Turkish and Russian Governments any one, Christian or Moslem, provided with a "carte d'identité" can enter Turkey from the Caucasus and return thither, no time-limit having been fixed.

The giving or withholding of the permit is left to the discretion of the General Commanding the Russian frontier.

The old system will continue on this side of the frontier, and no permits will be issued by the Turkish Government.

The military authorities strenuously opposed the measure, but their objections were overridden by the Porte and the Vali, who maintained that the risks were more than compensated by the greater freedom of communication and consequent benefits to the province.

I have, &c.
(Signed) A. SHIPLEY.

No. 84.

Sir N. O'Conor to the Marquess of Lansdowne.—(*Received July* 14.)

My Lord, *Constantinople, July* 9, 1904.

WITH reference to your Lordship's telegram of the 7th instant, no confirmation of murders or danger of massacre in the Vilayet of Van has reached me, and I consider that we should take with reserve the statements of the pro-Armenian Committee. It is possible, however, that this rumour may be based on an incident reported by His Majesty's Vice-Consul at Van in his despatch of the 10th instant.

The following telegram reached me from Captain Tyrrell yesterday :—

"In accordance with your Excellency's telegram of the 10th June I have visited the disturbed district, and have returned thence.

"The authorities placed no difficulties in my way, but I was not able to visit Kurd Sasun; there were, however, only two Armenian villages there.

"Investigation was difficult, as military operations were over long before I arrived and no inhabitants remained.

"As to points mentioned in your telegram of the 10th ultimo, it is impossible to compute actual loss of life without reliable statistics of population before and after events.

"For Akchaser Valley I estimate 900. The inhabitants of Talori are believed to be hidden pending resettlement; consequently there are very few refugees. Operations against these districts were directed from Diarbekir. There was probably less loss of life on the Moush side.

"I believe that, considering all the circumstances, it would probably be difficult to sustain charge of massacre and atrocities. It is true that I found corpses of women and children, but doubtless many of these deaths were due to the severity of the weather and exposure.

"The participation of the Kurds has not been established, and there is no doubt that the orders received were against this.

"The villages destroyed amount to thirty-four, but it is doubtful whether the insurgents themselves did not do this.

"Refugees have returned to Geliguzan, Shenik, Semal, and the six villages of Shattakh, and all is now quiet. The inhabitants of Talori and the Akshaser Valley were still absent, but an official has been sent to resettle them in their homes.

"At present a force of six battalions, with four guns, is encamped in these districts and barracks are being built.

"Should the local authorities loyally carry out their orders the villages should be restocked and the people settled before the winter.

"It will probably be advisable that a Consular officer should visit Talori side, with a view to seeing whether any steps are being taken for resettlement there. I could undertake this, and visit the Caza of Sasun at the same time, if you think it necessary; but the journey to Talori is a difficult one. Otherwise I should prefer returning to Van viâ Bulanik, as there were reports of trouble there some time ago."

In accordance with Captain Tyrrell's suggestion I have authorized him to visit Talori and Sasun, provided this can be done without personal risk or danger to himself, and to return to Van by Bulanik, as desired by him.

I have, &c.
(Signed) N. R. O'CONOR.

No. 85.

Sir N. O'Conor to the Marquess of Lansdowne.—(Received July 17.)

(Telegraphic.) *Therapia, July 17, 1904.*

VICE-CONSUL at Moush reports that the greater part of Bitlis bazaar was burnt on the 15th, and that he hears on good authority that there was much plundering by reservists and others; fire said to be accidental.

I have told him to return immediately to Bitlis, where his presence will have a good effect, especially as no other Consul is now there.

No. 86.

Sir N. O'Conor to the Marquess of Lansdowne.—(Received July 18.)

My Lord, *Therapia, July 11, 1904.*

I HAVE the honour to transmit to your Lordship herewith copy of a despatch from His Majesty's Vice-Consul at Bitlis, reporting upon the present situation in the neighbourhood of Moush and the return of the Armenian refugees from Sasun to their villages.

It is to be presumed that Mr. Heathcote's Report is chiefly based upon information he has gathered from the refugees and other Armenians at Moush, and it may be as well, therefore, to take it with some reserve until fuller particulars are received. Your Lordship will notice that his estimate of the number of persons killed does not at all tally with that given by Captain Tyrrell in his despatch of the 14th ultimo, which was forwarded in copy to your Lordship in my despatch of the 4th instant.

Although we may consequently have reasonable ground for hoping that the loss of life has not been so great as is conjectured by Mr. Heathcote, his despatch proves that a lamentable state of disorder exists, and that it has been marked by many deeds of violence committed both by the insurgents themselves and by the troops operating against them. No proof, however, is afforded that the Kurds participated in the disorders, and Captain Tyrrell reports that he has found no trace of their presence.

I have, &c.

(Signed) N. R. O'CONOR.

Inclosure in No. 86.

Vice-Consul Heathcote to Sir N. O'Conor.

Sir, *Moush, June 29, 1904.*

I HAVE the honour to report that since the date of my despatch of the 22nd June, the excesses reported from all parts of the plain appear for the moment at least to have ceased, and in the course of a week I have only heard of one murder. This, as well as one previous crime of the same nature, is probably the work of a certain Hadji Faris, who has long had the reputation of being one of the most lawless Kurds of the eastern part of the Moush plain. Kasim, who, as I have already reported, is in prison on the charge of killing the priest of Khaskeui, is his nephew, and the more recent crime is attributed to his son Hasan, whose arrest the Vali promises. We are urging that measures should be taken to restrain the violence of Hadji Faris himself, who is almost certainly the instigator of these offences.

The Vali now admits that he has been deceived by his agents in some cases, and that some of the incidents brought by us to his notice, and denied at the time, have really occurred.

There appears to be some ground for hoping that the period of licence which followed the military operations in Sasun is at last coming to an end, and that some effort will now be made to punish criminals. Several villages have lately been searched for insurgents without any of the excesses always reported before on these occasions.

The Vali has lately caused to be deported to Bitlis a member of the Administrative Council of Moush named Khalil Effendi, who has long been notorious for his

fanaticism and for abuses committed in connection with the farming of the tithes. I trust that he may ultimately be sent further than Bitlis, where he will find too many kindred spirits.

On the 22nd instant it was rumoured that a new order had been received from Constantinople to the effect that the refugees and surrendered insurgents were to be allowed to return to their former homes; this was officially confirmed the next day, and on the 25th all except a very few of these people were dispatched to the mountain. The Mutessarif of Moush went the same day to supervise the settlement in the nearer parts of the district, Shenik, Dapik, &c., which belong to this sandjak. He was accompanied by an Armenian member of the Moush Council of Administration. The total number of persons here was about 6,000—1,200 men who had surrendered and 4,500 women and children. There are now only a few sick persons left. Some families had already been removed to the plain in pursuance of the earlier Iradé, and I will endeavour to ascertain their desires and their prospects of obtaining them.

I am told that a small quantity of grain was taken, but in the last few days complaints have reached me that, instead of food, the Government has been distributing 10 paras (one halfpenny) a-head a-day; and as it is understood that there is no food in the district, this sum, which would at any time be inadequate, is now quite useless.

As to the present state of Sasun and its neighbourhood and the prospects of any harvest being reaped, I hope to receive news from Captain Tyrrell, who left Moush on the 23rd, going first to Dapik, near Semal, where he heard that Salih Pasha then was, and where, as I am informed, the building of barracks has been begun.

In the course of a recent conversation with the Vali, I asked what had become of the cattle that had belonged to the mountaineers; his answer was, "The people are rebels," and when I pressed the matter, asking whether the animals had therefore been confiscated to the State, or whether they had been stolen by the soldiers or the Kurds, he could only say that they had perished, energetically denying the participation of Kurds. As a matter of fact, I imagine that most of the beasts are in the neighbouring Kurdish villages, though I hear that some were brought to Moush and sold here, and some sent towards Erzeroum.

As I have before reported, Ferid Bey regards all the men of Sasun as active rebels who have surrendered and asked for pardon, and from this point of view it is not surprising that he should take little interest in the question of their cattle; but the total disappearance of the flocks and herds of nearly forty villages would demand some explanation if the Government desired to act with justice and humanity; but in that case it would also be necessary to inquire into the fate of a large proportion of the population also.

I have not access here to any of the printed or other reports giving an estimate of the former numbers of the inhabitants, but to the best of my recollection they amounted to well over 12,000 in 1894, and are not likely to have diminished since, in view of the prolific character of the Armenian race.

According to all Armenian accounts which are not denied by the officials, 37 villages are now empty, and as less than 6,000 men, women, and children were in Moush, and the number wandering in the mountains cannot be large, it must be supposed that the native estimate of 4,000 killed is not greatly exaggerated.

I have just heard from Captain Tyrrell at Geliguzan that the villages which he has seen are entirely denuded, not only of their inhabitants, but of everything—food, furniture, and utensils—though a fair number of houses are undestroyed. Except at Dapik, where troops are stationed, he has seen neither Armenians nor Kurds, and from his account it is absolutely necessary to provide food for the returning population. We have represented this to the Vali, who has promised to take the necessary measures.

The Governor-General speaks of returning to Bitlis before very long, and as evidence that the authorities are beginning to expect the return of normal conditions, I may mention the fact that Sami Bey, Inspector of Justice for the vilayets of Van and Bitlis, is about to return to Van, his usual residence. I am not aware that his presence here during the late troubles has had any effect whatever, though he has a good reputation, for it is only quite recently that the administrative authorities have begun to refer murders and other crimes to the Law Courts.

I have, &c.

(Signed) W. J. HEATHCOTE.

No. 87.

Sir N O'Conor to the Marquess of Lansdowne.—(*Received July* 18.)

My Lord, *Therapia, July* 11, 1904.

WITH reference to my despatch of the 28th ultimo, respecting the passage by insurgents of the Turco-Russian frontier, I have the honour to inform your Lordship that His Majesty's Acting Consul at Erzeroum reports that his Russian colleague has stated to several official people in that town that the Russian frontier posts of the second line have been brought up into the first line, in order to fill up the gaps, and that the passage of bands is now therefore absolutely impossible.

I have, &c.

(Signed) N. R. O'CONOR.

No. 88.

Sir N. O'Conor to the Marquess of Lansdowne.—(*Received July* 18.)

My Lord, *Therapia, July* 12, 1904.

I COMMUNICATED to the Grand Vizier yesterday the substance of Captain Tyrrell's telegraphic report of his visit to the Akchasher Valley and the Talori district, which I had the honour to forward to your Lordship in my despatch of the 9th instant.

His Highness took notes of the statements made therein, particularly in respect to the estimated loss of life, and said he would ask for further detailed reports from the authorities.

I also drew his attention to information which I had received from Erzeroum, and which seemed to be confirmed by His Majesty's Vice-Consul at Moush, that the cattle of the Armenian population had been stolen and distributed among the Moslems, who had sold many of them in the neighbouring markets at absurdly low prices. There was little use, I said, in reinstating the inhabitants in their homes if they had neither seed to sow or cattle to plough their lands, and I earnestly implored his Highness to do all in his power for the discovery and restoration of the cattle to their rightful owners. There was no doubt that the animals had disappeared, and the denials of the charge which his Highness stated had been telegraphed by the Valis of Erzeroum, Van, Bitlis, and Kharput did not alter the fact that the cattle were missing, and that the inhabitants must suffer great misery unless they were restored. His Highness said he would telegraph at once to the local authorities to take all possible steps to find out what had become of the cattle and to restore them to the people.

His Highness went on to speak of the result of the inquiries which had followed the seizure of various documents in the possession of insurgents who had been either killed or wounded during the late outbreak. There was no doubt in his mind that there was an extensive conspiracy on foot which had been planned and devised on Russian territory.

I said that I feared there would be no great improvement in the condition of affairs in those regions as long as the present radical vice of gross misgovernment continued to render the life of every Armenian unendurable. His Highness would give me credit for not wishing to malign the Ottoman Government, but, as a matter of fact, I did not remember talking to a single person who had lived in those parts or spent any time there who did not report that the brutalities, injustice, and corruption of most of the petty local officials rendered the life of the inhabitants well nigh intolerable, and made them only too ready to join in any insurrectionary movement that offered the least chance of relief. Let his Highness, if he could, correct these abuses, appoint capable and honest officials throughout the country, assess taxation according to the means of the people, protect the peaceful inhabitants, and offer to all even a modicum of security, and I undertook to say most confidently that the country would be very soon restored to a state of prosperity and tranquillity which would be a relief to the whole Empire, and a new and most favourable factor in the political situation.

His Highness added that he had just received information from a high-placed official stating that he had heard a report from Echmiazin to the effect that within a week there would be an extensive and dangerous revolutionary Armenian outbreak in the Caucasus.

His Highness did not know the exact importance to attach to this information, but

he had thought it prudent to considerably strengthen the frontier guard lest the insurgents should attempt to carry the movement into Turkey and renew the insurrectionary movement which had just been suppressed.

I have, &c.
(Signed) N. R. O'CONOR.

No. 89.

Sir N. O'Conor to the Marquess of Lansdowne.—(*Received July* 18.)

My Lord, *Therapia, July* 13, 1904.

WITH reference to my despatch of the 4th instant, I have the honour to inform your Lordship that His Majesty's Vice-Consul at Moush reported to me some time ago that the reinstatement of the refugees from the Sasun Mountains in their homes is likely to be seriously impeded by the Vali's appointment of an incompetent official to supervise the operations.

I lost no time in bringing the matter to the notice of the Grand Vizier, and have now pleasure in stating that in consequence of instructions sent to the Vali by his Highness the first appointment has been cancelled and a satisfactory official substituted, under whose supervision the reinstallation of the refugees in their homes would appear to be proceeding satisfactorily.

I have, &c.
(Signed) N. R. O'CONOR.

No. 90.

The Marquess of Lansdowne to Sir N. O'Conor.

Sir, *Foreign Office, July* 20, 1904.

I HAVE received your Excellency's despatch of the 9th instant relative to the state of affairs in the various districts of Armenia.

I approve the instructions which you have given to Captain Tyrrell with regard to his proposal to visit Talori and Sasun and to return viâ Bulanik.

I am, &c.
(Signed) LANSDOWNE.

No. 91.

The Marquess of Lansdowne to Sir N. O'Conor.

Sir, *Foreign Office, July* 20, 1904.

I HAVE received your Excellency's despatch of the 4th instant relative to the encounter which took place at Arjish between Armenian revolutionaries and Turkish gendarmes assisted by Zilan Kurds.

I approve the instructions which you have given to Captain Tyrrell to proceed at once without waiting for special permission to any place where an incident of a similar nature may seem to call for his presence.

I am, &c.
(Signed) LANSDOWNE.

No. 92.

The Marquess of Lansdowne to Sir N. O'Conor.

Sir, *Foreign Office, July* 21, 1904.

I HAVE received your Excellency's despatch of the 12th instant recording the conversation which you had with the Grand Vizier on the subject of the state of affairs in Armenia.

I approve the language which you held to his Highness on that occasion.

I am, &c.

(Signed) LANSDOWNE.

No. 93.

The Marquess of Lansdowne to Sir N. O'Conor.

Sir, *Foreign Office, July* 21, 1904.

I HAVE received your Excellency's despatch of the 13th instant relative to the arrangements for the reinstatement in their homes of the refugees from the Sasun Mountains.

I have learnt with satisfaction of the successful result of your representations which have led to the appointment of a satisfactory official to supervise the operations.

I am, &c.

(Signed) LANSDOWNE.

No. 94

Sir N. O'Conor to the Marquess of Lansdowne.—(Received July 25.)

My Lord, *Therapia, July* 19, 1904.

WITH reference to my despatch of the 13th instant and to previous correspondence upon the subject of the recent disturbances in the Sasun and Moush districts, I have the honour to transmit to your Lordship herewith copy of a despatch from His Majesty's Vice-Consul at Moush.

Mr. Heathcote reports that the condition of affairs in the neighbourhood of Moush has materially improved, and that the Turkish authorities are genuinely endeavouring to relieve the immediate wants of the refugees who have returned to their homes, that a suitable official has been appointed to supervise the work of reinstalling the refugees in their villages, and that the Vali has promised that the arrest of a notorious Kurd, named Hadji Faris, and some other malefactors, accused of murder and other crimes, shall be effected.

An inquiry at the Porte as to how matters are progressing in the disturbed district has elicited an answer that the Vali reports that the inhabitants are gradually withdrawing large quantities of grain, household property, and other effects from pits and other hiding-places in which they had concealed them before abandoning their homes. That the villagers should have taken such action in the hopes of safeguarding their property before fleeing from their homes would seem but natural. The Vali, however, states that he considers this as an additional proof of the general participation of the inhabitants in a deliberately-planned insurrectionary movement.

I am also informed by the Porte that the Vali of Erzeroum states that Armenak, one of the leaders of the insurrection, has been captured, after having been slightly wounded in the leg, at Diadin, near the Persian frontier. It was previously stated that this man had been killed in the fighting which took place near Geliguzan early in May.

I learn from Erzeroum that it was officially stated there, on the 16th instant, that fighting was being carried on with a band of fifty Armenians who had crossed into Bayezid on the 14th instant, that another band fifty strong had been repulsed at Narman on the 15th with loss, and that a Russian detachment was stated to be engaged with them, and that there is a large concentration of Armenian insurrectionaries on the Turco-Persian frontier near Van.

Acting under the instructions which, as I have already informed your Lordship by telegraph, I had sent him, Mr. Heathcote has now returned to Bitlis.

I have, &c.
(Signed) N. R. O'CONOR.

Inclosure in No. 94.

Vice-Consul Heathcote to Sir N. O'Conor.

Sir, *Moush, July* 6, 1904.

I HAVE the honour to report that two murders have occurred in the Moush Plain since the date of my despatch of the 29th June, and that, as there have only been three such crimes in more than a fortnight, it may be hoped that order, or what passes for order here, may have finally returned. In the mountain, too, all seems to be quiet, and I am happy to say that the local authorities are beginning to take measures to provide for the most urgent needs of the returned refugees—a first small consignment of millet for sowing having been dispatched on Monday night. The Vali assures me that arrangements have been made to send up 100 horse-loads of seed and supplies daily until all danger of starvation is at an end. This estimate is probably too optimistic, as the first departure was of only 30 animals instead of 100, but I think the Governor-General intends to do what is absolutely necessary, if only in order to facilitate his return to Bitlis by enabling us to report that the immediate future of the people of Sasun is assured, and ourselves to return to our posts.

The work of repatriation and supply is needlessly complicated by maintaining the division of the districts affected between the Sandjaks of Moush and Genj, and early last week the Vali sent for a certain Khalil Effendi of Bitlis, with the intention of sending him to Pasur to do for the Genj districts, including Talori, &c., what the Mutessarif of Moush was doing for his own province.

This man was the landlord and protégé of the late Vali, and was sometimes employed by him as Acting Kaïmakam. On one occasion he was sent to Khizan, where his first act was to summon the Armenian village Chiefs and to tell them that their presence was required by the Court at Bitlis, but that he could save them if they paid him money.

I represented these facts to the Vali, whose first reply was that they were probably true, but that he had no one else to send. At the same time I reported the case to your Excellency, and on my protesting again still more vigorously, he finally admitted that Khalil was totally unfitted for a work that demands not only common honesty but a certain measure of humanity as well, and he has now dispatched Jevdet Bey, Kaïmakam of Melazgird, to the district in question as Acting Mutessarif of Genj, with orders to act in concert with the Governor of Moush. Jevdet Bey, who is a Cretan, was lately Kaïmakam of Kulp, the caza which includes Talori and Pasur, where some 1,200 refugees now are; he therefore knows the country, and when I met him at at Melazgird last year he gave me the impression of an honest and capable man.

Last week the Vali had promised us an investigation into the charges of instigating various murders brought against Hadji Faris, holding out hopes of his arrest. Soon after the departure of my despatch under reference, in which this man is mentioned, we learnt that he had fled from his home at Shemlag, near Khaskeui, having evidently been warned of the steps being taken against him. M. Robin and I accordingly called on Ferid Bey to urge the point that the tranquillity of the province, which he professes to have at heart, can only be assured by prompt action against such men, as the punishment of a few Chiefs would soon intimidate minor criminals. We received the extraordinary reply that Hadji Faris had not been arrested because regular judicial proceedings were being taken against him. The conversation having turned to the subject of the cattle of the people of Sasun, Ferid Bey then put forward the still more astounding suggestion that the animals had been intrusted by the Armenians to their Kurdish neighbours. We naturally replied that we should believe this when the beasts were restored, and the Governor appears at last to have understood that we should not report that order was restored and the future of the mountaineers assured (which he very evidently desires) on the strength of such assertions only. At my next meeting with him I found that he was much more

disposed to act reasonably, and that the measures described at the beginning of this despatch had been taken, while he declared that he would effect the arrest of Hadji Faris and some other Kurdish malefactors. As to the former I doubt his success, as the man appears to have taken refuge in the lawless district of Khuit, but the suggestion that the Vali cannot reach him there may lead to a serious effort being made to apprehend him.

The Vali has just dismissed the Commandant of the Moush Gendarmerie, Alai Bey Youssouf Bey, who was probably responsible for the excesses committed at Komer on the 13th June, and also a Lieutenant of gendarmes.

I have just heard that on Tuesday night a second consignment of some thirty loads of supplies and seeds was sent to the mountain.

I have, &c.
(Signed) W. J. HEATHCOTE.

No. 95.

Sir N. O'Conor to the Marquess of Lansdowne.—(Received August 1.)

My Lord, *Therapia, July 26, 1904.*

WITH reference to my despatch of the 19th instant, I have the honour to transmit to your Lordship herewith copy of a despatch from His Majesty's Vice-Consul at Bitlis, reporting that the dispatch of supplies to the refugees who have returned home continues on a scale which it is promised shall be improved shortly, and that the state of tranquillity already reported in the Moush district continues.

Mr. Heathcote regrets that the attitude of the Vali leads him to anticipate that he is conniving at the escape of Hadji Faris, who is at Khuit.

I took an occasion yesterday to impress upon the Porte that it is imperative that supplies shall be furnished to the returned refugees, since a situation of the greatest misery and distress would be created should they be left unprovided for, their entire means of livelihood and subsistence having been destroyed during the recent troubles.

Mr. Lamb drew the Grand Vizier's attention, under my instructions, on the 19th instant, to the Kurd Hadji Faris, to whom reference is made in Mr. Heathcote's despatch, and represented the desirability of his arrest.

The Grand Vizier telegraphed the Embassy's complaint to the Vali of Bitlis, from whom he has now received a reply stating that the judicial authorities cannot ascertain that any previous conviction has been recorded against Hadji Faris, that his arrest under such circumstances would be contrary to justice and would excite the anger of his clan, that he had, however, intended to summon him administratively to Moush, but that the man had fled to his clan and taken refuge in consequence of the Dragoman of the French Consulate having spread it abroad that he was about to be arrested.

The Vali, however, concludes his telegram by saying that a statement having been made that he had instigated the murder of an Armenian in the village of Shemlagh, a prosecution has been instituted against Hadji Faris in accordance with law.

I have, &c.
(Signed) N. R. O'CONOR.

Inclosure in No. 95.

Vice-Consul Heathcote to Sir N. O'Conor.

Sir, *Moush, July 13, 1904.*

WITH reference to my despatch of the 6th July, I have the honour to report that the sending of supplies and seed to the mountains has continued during the past week on about the scale indicated by the earlier departures. The Vali maintains that he will very shortly have a larger number of transport animals at his disposal, and that the work will then be completed in good time to enable the villagers to reap a crop this autumn.

The state of tranquillity already reported still continues, no crime having come to our knowledge this week.

I regret to say, however, that no effort is being made to arrest Hadji Faris, the Vali

practically admitting that in Khuit he is out of reach, and it is quite clear that his promises that the man shall be taken when he ventures to return home cover a determination to connive at his escape.

I have, &c.
(Signed) W. J. HEATHCOTE.

No. 96.

Sir N. O'Conor to the Marquess of Lansdowne.—(*Received August* 2.)

(Telegraphic.) *Constantinople, August* 1, 1904.

I HAVE to-day received telegraphic information from His Majesty's Vice-Consul at Van that, on the 29th July, a serious conflict took place at Gravi, near Moush. Seventeen soldiers were killed. Subsequently the village of Sikavi was attacked by the troops and several of the inhabitants killed. Captain Tyrrell counted twenty-seven corpses, among them being those of ten women.

There is, he adds, renewed activity among the insurgents, who are determined to force matters to a head.

No. 97.

The Marquess of Lansdowne to Sir N. O'Conor.

Sir, *Foreign Office, August* 3, 1904.

THE Turkish Ambassador informed me to-day that the Porte had received a telegram from the Vali of Bitlis, reporting that Armenian brigands had attacked, at the village of Gravi, a detachment of soldiers sent from Moush to take over two pieces of artillery which had come from Trebizond. After killing twelve soldiers and wounding eight others, the brigands had set fire to the village, and had then fled to Akchan, which they had also burned. They had, further, set fire to another village, situated an hour's journey distant from Gravi.

I am, &c.
(Signed) LANSDOWNE.

No. 98.

Sir N. O'Conor to the Marquess of Lansdowne.—(*Received August* 5.)

My Lord, *Therapia, August* 1, 1904.

WITH reference to my despatch of the 9th ultimo, in which I transmitted to your Lordship a copy of a Report received from Captain Tyrrell of a journey to the disturbed districts of Sasun and Moush, I have the honour to transmit to your Lordship herewith a telegram just received from Captain Tyrrell reporting a visit to Talori and Sasun, and containing additional information about the present state of the disturbed districts, and stating that the probable loss of life during the recent troubles was everywhere exaggerated.

I am forwarding this information to your Lordship with all possible dispatch, and shall have the honour to communicate a fuller report as soon as it is received from Captain Tyrrell.

I have, &c.
(Signed) N. R. O'CONOR.

Inclosure in No. 98.

Captain Tyrrell to Sir N. O'Conor.

(Telegraphic.) *Moush, July* 30, 1904.

I HAVE to report my arrival here last night, the 29th instant.

In Sasun I collected 300 refugees from Talori, and on the 21st July handed them over to the Settlement officer. The number of refugees from Talori which have

returned since then has risen to 700, and there was evidently great exaggeration everywhere in the numbers reported killed.

There has been an outbreak of small-pox among the Armenians hiding in Sasun due to overcrowding, but now that they are returning to their own villages this should improve.

I consider the progress of reinstatement is satisfactory; I again visited nearly every village which had been destroyed. Cattle are being restored and houses rebuilt, &c., and the Mutessarif of Moush and his subordinates are working energetically and well.

The building of barracks is necessary to prevent a recurrence of these disturbances, and complaints on this score are therefore unjustifiable. There is no doubt that practically all people were rebels.

There is news of fight in the plain four hours from here. I have been out there all day, and will report to-morrow.

No. 99.

The Marquess of Lansdowne to Sir N. O'Conor.

Sir, *Foreign Office, August* 5, 1904.

I HAVE received your Excellency's despatch of the 26th ultimo, inclosing copy of a report from His Majesty's Vice-Consul at Bitlis relative to the state of affairs in the Moush district.

I approve the representations which you have made to the Sublime Porte as to the necessity of providing sufficient supplies for the refugees who have returned to their homes, and your action with regard to the arrest of Hadji Faris also has my approval.

I am, &c.
(Signed) LANSDOWNE.

No. 100.

Sir N. O'Conor to the Marquess of Lansdowne.—(*Received August* 8.)

My Lord, *Constantinople, August* 2, 1904.

WITH reference to my despatch of the 19th instant, I have the honour to forward to your Lordship herewith copy of a despatch from His Majesty's Acting Consul at Erzeroum, reporting that, after a three days' engagement, the band of Armenians at Bayezid was beaten back across the frontier with a loss of fifteen, the Turks losing ten in killed and wounded.

I have, &c.
(Signed) N. R. O'CONOR.

Inclosure in No. 100.

Acting Consul Shipley to Sir N. O'Conor.

Sir, *Erzeroum, July* 22, 1904.

WITH reference to my telegram of the 16th instant, I have the honour to report that, after a three days' engagement, the band of Armenians at Bayezid was beaten back across the frontier with a loss of fifteen. The Turks lost ten in killed and wounded.

The Vali tells me that, according to what he hears, a considerable number of revolutionaries are still on the Persian frontier, awaiting an opportunity for entering this vilayet.

I have, &c.
(Signed) A. SHIPLEY.

No. 101.

Sir N. O'Conor to the Marquess of Lansdowne.—(Received August 8.)

My Lord, *Therapia, August 2, 1904.*

WITH reference to my telegram of yesterday's date, I have the honour to transmit to your Lordship herewith copy of a Memorandum, drawn up by Mr. Lamb, containing the Turkish version of the recent incidents in the Moush neighbourhood.

Captain Tyrrell states that in the combat at Gravi (Karavi) the Turks lost seventeen men killed, whereas the Porte state that twelve men were killed and eight wounded.

The two accounts agree in saying that the insurgents burned the village before the arrival of the Turkish troops, and that all the inhabitants fled, but no mention is made in Captain Tyrrell's Report of the village of Akchan, which the Turkish version says was likewise burned and abandoned by the insurgents. Captain Tyrrell, however, states that a battalion of Turkish soldiers surrounded a village called Sikavi, an hour beyond Gravi, during the night (presumably of the 29th ultimo), and made an unprovoked attack on it at dawn the following day, and that he himself had counted hte bodies of twenty-seven dead villagers, of whom ten were women. No mention is made of Sikavi in the Report received by the Porte, which states, however, that the soldiers and gendarmes pursued ten of the insurgents to a place called Sheikh Youssouf, 3 miles from Karavi (Gravi), where they took refuge in a church and refused to surrender, so that it was necessary to storm the building, with the result that the ten insurgents were all killed.

Captain Tyrrell further reports that an affray occurred at a place called Kumis, in the Moush Plain, on the 23rd ultimo, which resulted in the death of five Mussulmans at the hands of the insurgents, and that the various incidents have caused much irritation among the soldiers and Mussulmans against the Armenians. He adds that the insurgents, who are again active in the plain, would appear to be determined to force matters.

I have, &c.
(Signed) N. R. O'CONOR.

Inclosure in No. 101.

Memorandum by Mr. Lamb.

FOLLOWING is the official version of the incidents alluded to at the end of Captain Tyrrell's telegram of the 30th ultimo:—

On the 16th (29th) July some forty artillerymen, belonging to the Moush garrison, were sent out to meet and bring in two guns, dispatched some time previously from Trebizond to replace two others of an obsolete pattern in use at Moush. At a distance of 9 or 10 miles north of the town they fell into an ambush prepared for them by some thirty or forty Armenian revolutionaries, who had been concealed in the village of Karavi, losing twelve of their number killed and eight wounded.

News of this outrage reached Moush about half-past 6 in the evening, and troops and gendarmes were immediately dispatched to the spot. On their arrival near Karavi the revolutionaries set fire to that village and took to flight. The soldiers and gendarmes, under the command of the Alai Bey, pursued them to Akchan, which village they likewise set fire to and abandoned. Ten of their number were traced to the village of Sheikh Youssouf, 3 miles from Karavi, where they took refuge in the church, where they were surrounded. After they had been frequently summoned to surrender, and had as frequently refused, towards sunset on the 17th (30th) the Alai Bey, fearing that the revolutionaries might take advantage of the approaching darkness to make good their escape, ordered an assault to be made upon the church, with the result that all ten of the Armenians were killed, a gendarme named Khalil, and a servant of the Mudir of Akchan, who had accompanied the pursuing force, being dangerously wounded. The Armenians were all found to have been armed and provided with three belts of cartridges apiece.

(Signed) HARRY H. LAMB.

August 1, 1904.

No. 102.

Sir N. O'Conor to the Marquess of Lansdowne.—(*Received August* 15.)

My Lord, *Therapia, August* 9, 1904.

WITH reference to my despatch of the 2nd instant, reporting upon the renewal of disturbances in the Plain of Moush, I have the honour to transmit copy of a Memorandum left with me by the French Chargé d'Affaires, containing the latest news received by the French Embassy from their Consular Agent at Van, which indicates a recrudescence of the revolutionary movement, having, it is pointed out, for object to attract the attention of the Powers.

I also beg to inclose copy of a Memorandum by Mr. Lamb, showing the nature of the representations made to the Grand Vizier, under my instructions, upon the receipt of Captain Tyrrell's telegram reporting that fighting had occurred at Gravi and Sikavi. Your Lordship will perceive that the Grand Vizier at once issued instructions to the local authorities to prevent the repetition of such acts as those stated to have occurred at Sikavi, and has requested that the foreign Consular officers may be told to use special care not to let the population imagine that their Governments are supporting the revolutionary movement.

I received a telegram from Captain Tyrrell from Moush on the 5th instant asking for permission to visit certain villages about two days distant, in order to investigate a complaint made by the Armenian Bishop. In authorizing Captain Tyrrell to make this journey, I warned him that he should be especially careful to so regulate his movements as not to let the insurgents imagine that he was giving them any encouragement, since it appeared that they were bent on provoking foreign intervention, and I suggested that he might invite the Russian Consul, who is still at Moush, to accompany him on his expedition.

Captain Tyrrell should be back in Moush to-morrow, and I propose to instruct him to remain there for the present, should he report that the neighbourhood is still in an unsettled state.

I have, &c.
(Signed) N. R. O'CONOR.

Inclosure 1 in No. 102.

Memorandum communicated by M. Bapst to Sir N. O'Conor.

ENTRE Khinis et Mouch, à Kara Aghatch, un détachement d'artillerie venant d'Erzéroum a été attaqué le 31 Juillet. On signale actuellement des troubles occasionnés par de petites bandes de révolutionnaires.

A Nérék, près du monastère d'Aghatch (?), des révolutionnaires ont attaqué les soldats, leur ont tué et blessé plusieurs hommes.

On signale d'autres groupes de révolutionnaires qui seraient actuellement disposés à se montrer en divers endroits à la fois et à provoquer des désordres qui amèneraient de nouveaux massacres pour attirer de nouveau l'attention des Grandes Puissances.

Van, le 3 *Août*, 1904.

(Translation.)

A DETACHMENT of artillery on the way from Erzeroum was attacked on the 31st July at Kara Aghatch, between Khinis and Moush. Disturbances occasioned by small bands of revolutionaries are now being reported.

At Nerek, near the monastery of Aghatch, revolutionaries attacked the troops, and killed and wounded several men.

It is reported that other bands of revolutionaries are at this moment preparing to make their appearance in several different quarters at once, and to excite disturbances which would lead to fresh massacres in order to reattract the attention of the Great Powers.

Van, August 3, 1904.

Inclosure 2 in No. 102.

Memorandum by Mr. Lamb.

IN accordance with your Excellency's instructions, I this afternoon caused the substance of Captain Tyrrell's telegram of yesterday to be communicated to the Grand Vizier, whom I was unable to see personally, drawing his attention in particular to the dangerous temper in which Captain Tyrrell represented the troops at Moush to be and the disastrous results which must ensue if immediate and adequate measures were not taken to restrain them from a repetition of such acts as he describes to have taken place at Sikavi.

The Grand Vizier returned me a message to the effect that he had immediately taken measures for the transmission of the necessary orders to Moush. He asked me at the same time to represent to your Excellency the desirability of impressing on the Consuls in those regions that they also should, by their action and language, endeavour not to give encouragement to the discontented element of the population, which was prone to interpret their investigations and their representations to the local authorities as a sign that the European Governments were supporting them in their insurrectionary movement.

I replied that we had full confidence in the discretion of our Consular officers in those parts, and were convinced that they would neither do nor say anything calculated to encourage rebellion. The representations they were from time to time compelled to make were made in the interests of the Ottoman Government itself. If his Highness meant to suggest that they should bring direct influence to bear on the revolutionary element itself, such a thing was obviously beyond their powers, since our Consuls had no acquaintance, or means of communication, with it.

(Signed) HARRY H. LAMB.

August 2, 1904.

No. 103.

Sir N. O'Conor to the Marquess of Lansdowne.—(Received August 22.)

My Lord, *Therapia, August* 16, 1904.

I HAVE the honour to transmit to your Lordship copy of a despatch from His Majesty's Vice-Consul at Bitlis, reporting upon a visit paid by him and the French Consul to the villages of Germav and Dapik in the course of last month.

Mr. Heathcote says that the inhabitants of the former village appeared discontented, although they had received wheat for food and seed millet from the Turkish authorities, had recovered a portion of their cattle, and had been offered pecuniary assistance to enable them to rebuild their houses.

I have, &c.

(Signed) N. R. O'CONOR.

Inclosure in No. 103.

Vice-Consul Heathcote to Sir N. O'Conor.

Sir, *Bitlis, July* 26, 1904.

I HAVE the honour to report that when Captain Tyrrell went for the second time to Sasun and Talori on the 15th July, the French Consul and I accompanied him as far as Germav, one of the nearest of the destroyed villages, about five hours' distant from Moush. We found over 200 villagers there out of an alleged population of 320 before the outbreak.

Millet had been supplied by the Government for sowing and wheat for food, and the people were already in possession of a small number of sheep and cattle, which had been in the hands of neighbouring Kurds. We were unable to ascertain with any certainty how these animals came to be restored; the Government claims the credit on the one hand, but from the confused and contradictory statements of the villagers it

would appear that before the troubles some of the cattle had really been intrusted to the Kurds on condition that a proportion should be returned and part retained in payment.

The inhabitants, however, though possessed of seed, oxen, and of timber, were refusing to sow the grain, alleging that it was too late, or to rebuild their houses, claiming that the Government ought to do it for them. The season is doubtless late for sowing, but if it were undertaken at once, there would, I think, be good reason to hope for a crop, and we consequently endeavoured to persuade them to set to work without delay; perhaps they may do so now that they see that we do not support them in their refusal. It is clear that if they eat the seed-grain now in place of the wheat which they profess to dislike, they would have no claim on the Government later for further assistance.

As to the rebuilding, the Government had offered some money to the people of Germav, but they had refused it, hoping to obtain more. We strongly advised them to take what they could get.

The authorities claim that a considerable number of cattle have been recovered throughout the district, but I am not in a position to speak for any other part of it.

On our return we passed Dapik, where barracks are being built in a commanding site. The officer in command assured us that the buildings would be ready for use before the cold weather.

I have, &c.
(Signed) W. J. HEATHCOTE.

No. 104.

Sir N. O'Conor to the Marquess of Lansdowne.—(Received August 22.)

My Lord, *Therapia, August* 16, 1904.

THE Armenian Patriarch called upon me yesterday, and spoke at considerable length about the condition of affairs in Armenia and the late incidents in the Moush district.

His Beatitude complained mostly of the heavy taxes levied upon the people and of the existing administrative organization, by which all the power was placed in the hands of a Vali living in the capital of the province and exercising little control over the acts of the subordinate officials. He promised to send me a Memorandum clearly stating his complaints in respect to the two questions, and he begged for my good offices with the Imperial Government.

In the course of conversation I told his Beatitude that I had heard with deep concern the statements he had made to several newspaper correspondents, to the effect that he believed that between 6,000 and 9,000 persons had been massacred in the Sasun and Talori districts during the late troubles, and that I deeply regretted that upon my applying for precise information which would enable me to make earnest representations to the Grand Vizier, his Beatitude has sent me word that he was unable to indicate the places at which these massacres had taken place or to affirm that his reports were based on really trustworthy information.

His Beatitude replied that he had had no means of controlling these reports, and that he had communicated them to others as he had received them.

I said that, judging from the reports of His Majesty's Consul at Van, who had visited many of the districts in question, the numbers of victims mentioned by his Beatitude was grossly exaggerated. Captain Tyrrell was more inclined to estimate the number at 900 than at 9,000, and he had, moreover, been unable to confirm the statements in the public press that there had been any massacre of Armenians in the ordinary sense of these words, although, no doubt, many innocent persons had been killed both by the insurgents and the troops. In fact, as far as I could judge at present, it seemed that the late outrage at Sikavi, upon which I had based very serious representations to the Sublime Porte, was the most wanton deed of the whole summer.

I did not despair of following to the end the investigations which had been set on foot by the Grand Vizier. If, however, his Beatitude could now furnish me with more definite information, I would do all in my power, in conjunction with my French and Russian colleagues, to bring about a searching investigation on the spot.

Mgr. Ormanian replied that he was not in a position to give me this information, but

that he believed that the number of persons killed and massacred in the late troubles was certainly not less than 2,000.

I have, &c.
(Signed) N. R. O'CONOR.

No. 105.

Sir N. O'Conor to the Marquess of Lansdowne.—(*Received August* 22.)

My Lord, *Therapia, August* 16, 1904.

I HAVE the honour to inclose herewith to your Lordship copies of two despatches from Captain Tyrrell.

These despatches are of unusual interest, as they record the result of his personal visit to the disturbed districts, and enable a correct judgment to be formed of the events which have taken place, and their real origin.

I have, &c.
(Signed) N. R. O'CONOR.

Inclosure 1 in No. 105.

Vice-Consul Tyrrell to Sir N. O'Conor.

Sir, *Moush, July* 31, 1904.

I HAVE the honour to report that when I left Van under instructions from your Excellency to visit Geliguzan and investigate what had occurred there, I had no idea that my journey would be such an extended one, or that I should be away so long. I expected to return to Van on the completion of the investigation, and intended to report fully from there. But under the circumstances, and as I visited the disturbed districts twice, I feel that you would perhaps like some news in explanation of the telegrams I have sent from Moush, and I will, therefore, send a summarizing despatch.

As explained in my telegram of the 8th July, an accurate, or even approximate computation of the number of Armenians killed was impossible, and there were absolutely no Armenians left from whom to make inquiries. All that one saw were the remains of burnt villages and the camps of the soldiers. Before I returned to Moush, the refugees had begun to come in for resettlement, and I was able to converse with the Armenian villagers.

I found corpses in the mountains, including those of women and children; and, of course, there were many I did not see. Still, there were not as many as the Armenians said. A man would tell me that there were twenty or thirty in a certain place, never dreaming that I would go up into the mountains and verify his statements. If I found two or three anywhere near the place indicated, I considered myself lucky. Often there were none, or else the guide would, after many hours' climbing, escape from having the story disproved, by indicating a spot which it was quite impossible to reach that day.

A few such experiences made me very sceptical about the number of corpses to be found in the mountains, and of accounts of massacres of people who surrendered. What corpses I did find did not tell me much, as at that time it was impossible to say whether they had been killed or died from exposure. The Armenians said that there were not more evidences of massacre about, because the soldiers threw all the corpses into the rivers, then in spring flood. The Turks said that it was quite impossible for them to kill women aud children or even unarmed men, and that the corpses I found were those of people who, in foolish and causeless terror, had fled to the mountains, and naturally at that season had died from exposure. I can only say that there is, so far as I know, absolutely no proof one way or the other. Both statements are interested, and both exaggerated.

My belief is that very little massacring took place in the villages; that the people had, in the vast majority of cases, managed to leave them and escape to the hills before the soldiers got in; that for some days the soldiers (*pace* the asseverations of every Turkish officer) were searching for them in the hills, and killing every one they found. At the same time, most of the people succeeded in hiding themselves till these few days were over.

There is no doubt that practically every man in the disturbed districts was an armed

rebel, and the revolutionists "began it" by attacking Kurdish villages. Then, in deciding the point of "massacres and atrocities," one can hardly judge the Turkish soldier by our humaner standards. One must remember that this was, for a few days, war, and to him a religious war, as well as one against rebels; and that at the commencement the troops suffered losses which made them eager for revenge.

I also incline, after careful consideration, but again without absolute proof, to the view that the revolutionists burned the villages themselves before evacuating them, as part of a preconceived plan to afford the soldiers no shelter, to force the people to flee into the mountains, to excite public opinion against the Turks, and even to increase the casualties among the Armenians and to prevent them from surrendering. When the people began to come in and surrender they were not killed.

As for participation by Kurds, even the Armenians in many cases absolutely denied it, and said that all the damage was done by soldiers. Others said that Kurds were used by the soldiers as guides to find the people who had fled into the mountains. This is very probable. At the same time, many of the Armenians owe their lives to Kurdish protection, and were hiding for a long time in Kurdish villages. There is in Sasun a feudal relationship between the Kurds and the Armenians, and the latter made over their cattle and goods to the former with the stipulation that they were to be returned when the affair was over, while if the owner were killed they would become the property of the Kurd who took charge of them. Now that resettlement has begun, the Kurds have in some cases loyally fulfilled their part of the bargain and returned the cattle and goods. In others, where the Kurds are disposed to keep what they have got, the Armenians are in a difficult position. The Government will recover their cattle if they will say where they are, but they cannot do this without laying the Kurds who sheltered them open to the charge of having sheltered a rebel whom the Government was looking for. Once the order for resettlement was received, the inhabitants of Shenik, Semal, Geliguzan, and the six villages of Shattakh, who were mostly refugees in Moush, were sent back to their villages. But there was considerable delay in Talori, Sasun, and Khiyan, owing to the inaccessibility of those places, for which a special Settlement Officer was appointed. When he arrived, the Sasun refugees, mostly from Moush, and the Khiyan refugees, mostly from Passur, were sent in leisurely, and the building of barracks was begun energetically. But the Talori refugees did not appear. I found that they were hiding in the quarter of the Sasun Caza known as Kavvar-i-Pisank. I therefore pitched my tents there. At first a few men turned up casually, saying that they were the only survivors—afterwards that there were a few others "in the mountains." They seemed happy enough and well fed, and not at all like people who had been living in mountain-tops for nearly three months and eating nothing but grass, which was what they wanted me to believe.

I visited several of the villages of Kavvar-i-Pisank to try and induce refugees from Talori to go back to their own villages, but I was always told that there were now in that particular place at most one house or four or five persons. I then announced that I was going into Talori, and that if people cared to have the advantage of my protection they could accompany me; if not, they could stay where they were and make their own arrangements. That evening crowds began collecting on the hills above the village where I was camped, people were passing my tents during the night; and when I started next morning, I found 299 refugees collected. I sent them off to their own villages and went myself to the central village of Talori, where I found the Mutessarif of Moush on an inspection visit. I gave him the names of all the refugees I had collected with their villages, handing them over; and from that date they began to draw the Government allowance of 11 paras a-day per head, or its equivalent in food.

I next visited the villages of Akchaser, Sevid, Kuznak, Ardonk, and Helink, and found that the resettlement had begun there. When I came back to Talori on my way back to Moush I found the number of refugees there had reached to nearly 750.

Though, as I said in my telegram of the 30th July, the work of resettlement is progressing satisfactorily, still it is not an easy one, and the people must suffer somewhat, and will probably find themselves on short rations at times, and uncomfortable for some time to come.

It would tax even a good Administration with money at its command to carry out this work really well; and one cannot expect the necessary forethought and arrangement from most Turkish officials. For instance, refugees of the Khiyan villages were given one month's subsistence allowance in cash in lieu of rations. They complain reasonably that money is of no use to them there; they cannot eat cash, and there is nothing to buy.

On the other hand, the Government could not transport sufficient food to those inaccessible places. They were doing their best to collect animals for transport, and to arrange for a regular service; but even with a more efficient administration, it is no easy matter to overcome the physical difficulties of the countries; and, meanwhile, the people must help themselves as far as possible. I found a considerable inclination on their part to do nothing except cavil at the terms on which they are being resettled, and to call upon me to provide everything on the spot or else force the Turks to do so.

These terms are really very fair if only they are fairly carried out. In the nearer villages I think they are being fairly carried out, but in the more inaccessible ones, as I have just pointed out, it is not so easy, though here again I think that the intentions of the officials are good, and only a little patience and trying to make the best of it are necessary.

I am not at all sure that the presence of a foreign Consul is an unmixed blessing. Every Armenian seems to think that he is there to uphold him in every case against the Government, and that the best way to please him is to pour the most absurd complaints and lies into his ears.

On the other hand, it undoubtedly tends to keep the Turkish officials up to the mark, and to prevent petty tyranny.

I referred in my telegram of the 30th July to the complaints which are being made as to the building of barracks; but this is only a natural and necessary precaution for the Turks to take. The people have brought it on themselves, and some of them even told me that they would have more revolution on the first opportunity, and that the last has not been heard of it yet.

In this connection I may mention an interview which I had, at his request, with C., an Armenian Notable, in the neighbourhood.

He began by thanking me in the name of the people for the trouble I had taken in going into the hill districts to see for myself what had happened there. At the same time, he gave me the impression that they thought I had taken quite needless trouble, that this was hardly what they expected of a Consul, and that I might have been better employed in receiving Petitions, and in accepting *ex parte* statements at their face value.

He then went on to relate all the grievances of the Armenians as a nation, and the particular evils they are now enduring in this part of the country owing to recent events. I could not but agree with what he said on these points. The root of the evil is bad government; the Armenians are not protected from Kurds, Circassians, Zaptiehs and soldiers by the Government which expects them to pay taxes to the utmost farthing, and demands their loyalty, while often withholding from them ordinary justice. At the same time, the whole of his speech was imbued with a revolutionary undercurrent, with the still present hope of European intervention, with the idea that the Turkish yoke was to be shaken off. The revolutionary propaganda of recent years have penetrated to every class of the community. I was surprised to find in the mountains that the ignorant villagers were not quite the helpless tools of a few intriguers and guiding spirits, which I had supposed them to be; but that every one of them was saturated with the principles of an independent Armenia, and that they looked upon a foreign Consul as a sort of political emissary who also had this end in view.

I explained to him that the revolutionists were his nation's worst enemies at the present time, that we were trying to mitigate the hardships of the unfortunate Armenians who have lately been rendered homeless, to urge the Turkish authorities to deal mercifully and kindly with the refugees, and to improve the general condition of the people. But that an affair like that which had occurred three days previously at Gravi, where seventeen soldiers had been killed, made it extremely difficult, and afforded the Turks some pretexts for excesses.

He said, what all the Armenians say, that the revolutionists forced themselves upon the people, and that the Government did not protect the people from the Fedaïs, while it afterwards visited the sins of the Fedaïs upon the villages where they were known to have stayed.

This also is to a certain extent true.

But, on the other hand, all the people sympathize with and help the Fedaïs. If they did not, the task of the revolutionists would become so thankless and difficult that they would soon leave the country alone.

Then came the question whether an oppressed people had not a moral right to rebel. Possibly, but then they must be prepared to take the consequences of rebellion.

I begged him to use all his influence to get these ideas of revolution and foreign

intervention out of the heads of the people, to persuade them to keep quiet, and to give their Government no cause of complaint, and then to hope for a quiet life and an improved Government.

Having thus disposed of the general question we came to particulars. I found that he had nothing definite to complain of about the resettlement, probably because he knew that I knew what was being done. One or two minor points which he mentioned I promised to bring to the notice of the Mutessarif, and I have no doubt these can be arranged without troubling your Excellency. Somewhat to my surprise he left untouched the question of the new barracks and of the location of troops in the heart of the hitherto semi-independent Armenian districts, probably because my views on this point and my advice to the people who had complained in those districts had been made known to him.

As regards the Gravi affair, reported fully in another despatch of to-day's date, he said that the soldiers came and surrounded the village, and opened fire on it without cause. This is absolutely untrue, and is the invariable Armenian version of these occurrences. If the soldiers were in the habit of doing this, how is it that revolutionists always happen to be found in the villages they select for attack? Again, the position of the expended cartridge cases I found showed that the fight had been within the village, about the church and the houses facing it, and that the village had not been fired upon from positions outside. These same cartridge cases and the fortification of the church also showed clearly that it was a case of revolutionists, without all the other evidence.

He then admitted all this, but said that the soldiers had burned the village. I have also explained to your Excellency in my other despatch of to-day how the smoke and flames which I saw could not be attributed to the soldiers.

He then said that the village of Akchan had been burned by the soldiers. Here again I could reply that I had been there myself, that out of eighty Armenian and seven Kurdish houses in the village not one had been burnt, and that only twelve buildings, barns, &c., on the outskirts of the village were burnt. He said that the village had been attacked by Kurds. I said that the only cartridges I had found there were Berdans, Moksins, and Gras, all rifles used by revolutionists and not by the Kurds. He said that Kurds used Berdan rifles. It may be so, but I have never yet seen a Kurd with one.

Of course the Sikavi incident is an indefensible one, and I could only say that I hoped this sort of thing would cease, but that the easiest way of bringing this about was to remove the cause of the provocation.

Finally, just as I was leaving, he said that a man had that moment come in from Talori to say that the allowances of money to the people had ceased, and that the Kaïmakam there was doing nothing now that the Consul had left. I asked to see the man, and immediately recognized him as a half-witted fellow whom I had employed. I found this man to be such a liar and so troublesome that I had had to get rid of him. He wished to make me believe that every one in Talori had been massacred, and tried to prevent other villagers from coming to my tents.

The day after I had dismissed him I came across him carrying a gun which had doubtless been used in the few days' fighting and then carefully hidden. He finally refused to settle down with the other refugees in his own village. Knowing what I did of this man, I could not possibly accept his statement.

I simply mention this incident and some of the baseless statements made by my informant (in perfect good faith, I believe) to show how little reliance can be placed upon the majority of complaints and Petitions one gets here, and the kind of sources from which the reports emanate.

I have, &c.
(Signed) G. E. TYRRELL, *Captain.*

Inclosure 2 in No. 105.

Vice-Consul Tyrrell to Sir N. O'Conor.

Sir, *Moush, July* 31, 1904.

I HAVE the honour to report that two mountain guns of the new pattern in exchange for the battery at Moush were on their way here from Erzeroum. On the 29th July forty men of the 1st Battalion 30th Regiment were sent out from Moush to meet them, take them over from the Erzeroum escort, and bring them in.

In the afternoon of that day these forty soldiers were passing the village of Gravi on the right bank of the Murad (Euphrates) in the plain, north of Moush. The village comes right up to the road and some of its houses extend along the road-side for a hundred yards or so. Immediately opposite them, across the road and about 50 yards away, is the church on a low knoll.

It is not clear whether the soldiers halted on the road under the church, whether they sat down to drink at the spring in the village, or whether they were merely passing along the road between the church and the village, when fire was opened upon them, both from the roof of the church, on which a stone sangar had been built, and from the roofs of the houses. Anyhow, they were completely surprised; seventeen were killed at the first volley and seven or eight wounded. The rest cleared out as quickly as possible and got away most of the wounded. All the dead were left, and some twenty rifles with the ammunition belonging to them fell into the hands of the revolutionists. The Turks say also that the bodies were afterwards stripped of their jackets and shirts, and in some cases mutilated. News was only received in Moush about sundown.

The Ferik at once sent out the remainder of the battalion with orders to meet the guns as quickly as possible and bring them safely in. Some cavalry and gendarmes, under Izzet Bey, the Alai Bey, and Ibrahim Bey, the Kaïmakam of the 24th Cavalry Regiment also went out. As I was coming down the hill into Moush that evening I observed smoke in the plain in that direction, and after sunset I saw a light which we judged to be a burning village. I mentioned this point in order to bear out the version of the affair which I give and which I believe to be the correct one, and to dispose of the Armenian statement that the village was burnt by the soldiers. For the soldiers could not have arrived there till three hours after sundown, about 10 P.M. at earliest. When they got there they found that the revolutionists had decamped, having first set fire to the village, and that the latter was totally deserted, all the inhabitants having fled rather than await the retribution which would probably have been in store for them if they had been found there.

The Alai Bey and the gendarmerie went east in pursuit of the revolutionists. The battalion had apparently had orders on leaving Moush to go on and see to the safety of the guns. They found these at the village of Sikavi, about an hour further on, where their escort had encamped for the night. The guns were brought on into Moush the next day.

I only got the news of what had happened about 9 A.M. on the 30th July. I rode out at once and met the battalion returning. I counted the seventeen corpses. When I got back in the evening and went to see the Vali about the whole affair, I found that the Ferik had told him that only seven or eight soldiers had been killed, and it is only now that he knows that I saw the corpses myself that he admits to the whole number.

When I reached Gravi I found a Tabur Aghassi of gendarmerie there and a couple of zaptiehs, the village still burning, and four corpses (three being Mussulman and one Christian). These were said to have been wayfarers who happened to be on the road or in the vicinity at the time of the fight. The Tabur Aghassi had been left there to look after the villages of the immediate neighbourhood and to induce the inhabitants to return.

I picked up several Moksin and Berdan cartridge cases. These are the rifles chiefly affected by the revolutionists. Very few Mausers; and the troops were probably too much shaken to make much defence at the time. The church had been completely wrecked, the scattered fragments of its sacred books were littered about, and a fire was burning inside it. This was, of course, the work of the troops later on, but one can hardly be surprised at it under the circumstances, as the revolutionists had converted it into a fortress, and it was from it that the greater part of the casualties among the soldiers was inflicted.

The most surprising thing is that this detachment of forty soldiers should have walked so unsuspectingly into the trap, as the stone sangar all round the edge of the flat roof of the church was quite evident to any attentive man coming along the road. I had heard from the soldiers as I came along that they had done something in Sikavi, so I went on there.

I found the inhabitants in a panic and preparing to leave. There had been a massacre early that morning, and I saw the bodies of seventeen men and ten women. Of the former, one was an old Mussulman, an Erzeroumli, who was in charge of the post horses, this village being a "menzil," or stage, on the post road; two were Armenian butchers from Moush, where they are well known, and who had come out to Sikavi on business; the rest were villagers. No question of revolutionists at all. It seems

that the battalion (1st Battalion 30th Regiment above mentioned) had come on during the night, taken over the guns, and in the morning deliberately entered the village and shot at every one they came across, in revenge for their comrades who had been ambuscaded at Gravi.

The Acting Bimbashi was present, but the authorities say that the men were completely out of hand, and would not listen to their officers. This is very possible, and I have had the same story from other sources.

It seems that when the news of the Gravi affair came in on the evening of the 29th the men took their arms and went off, saying that they would do something even if they were hanged for it, and threatening to shoot their officers if they tried to stop them.

I feel that, if this sort of promiscuous retribution is to cease, an example ought to be made. Yet it is extremely difficult to fix the responsibility. It is not easy to punish a whole battalion, even when the state of discipline of the troops allows of such a course. One can say easily enough that the Ferik is responsible for such a state of things, but the fanaticism of the Turkish soldiers would not be altered by a change of Feriks.

My personal knowledge of the Acting Bimbashi of the battalion makes me unwilling to hastily impute the blame to him unless I can get convincing proof that he was a party to the action of his men.

I found two post zaptiehs in Sikavi who bore out the statements of the villagers as to the details of this attack. I tried to persuade the villagers to remain, and told them that I would go and see the Vali directly I got back to Moush and make him send out some one to protect them. They were in fear of a similar massacre that night, and said that the Circassians had threatened to come and attack them. There are three Circassian villages in the vicinity, Zirink, Shalbo, and Tepe Keui, and these Circassians apparently do what they like in the surrounding Armenian villages and terrorize the gendarmerie.

I visited the village of Akchan across the river, which was also deserted. Found no corpses here, nor any evidence of a massacre. Twelve outbuildings, barns, storehouses, &c., had been burned. Here also there were zaptiehs looking after the village till the people should return. I do not believe that soldiers came here at all, but was told that the revolutionists, in passing from Gravi, had made a demonstration round the village, fired several shots, and burned the outhouses mentioned above, in order to frighten the people and induce them to abandon the village. All the cartridge cases I picked up here were Moksins, Berdans, and Gras.

Directly I got back to Moush that evening I went to see the Vali, and told him exactly what I had seen. He had had no news of the Sikavi affair, he said. He also promised to have some soldiers specially sent out to protect the village.

Next day I sent my Dragoman out to see if this had been done. He found that the villagers had left, after all, on my departure, and had not cared to risk another night there. Only the Kyaya (Headman) remained, and there were some soldiers there to protect the houses until the people should return. The Kyaya said that no looting had taken place, that the villagers were safe with most of their goods and chattels and their live-stock in other villages, and that they would return gradually when the panic had subsided. There were three men and two women died of wounds to be added to the list of victims in the village, bringing the total up to thirty-two.

I have just heard that the Alai Bey found some of the revolutionists at Sheikh Youssouf, a village in the plain, further east, brought them to bay there, and killed ten of them. The people of Sheikh Youssouf have fled. I have seen some of them, who say that no massacre took place. The Armenians, on the other hand, say that only seven armed men were killed by the Alai Bey and his gendarmes, and that these were not "real" revolutionists, but villagers, and that unarmed men were killed as well.

I have, &c.

(Signed) G. E. TYRRELL, *Captain.*

No. 106.

Sir N. O'Conor to the Marquess of Lansdowne.—(*Received August* 22.)

My Lord, *Therapia, August* 16, 1904.

WITH reference to my despatch of the 2nd instant, reporting upon the recent incident at Sikavi and the representations I had made to the Porte on the subject,

I have the honour to state that I am informed by Captain Tyrrell that the instructions the Grand Vizier promised me he would send have been received by the local authorities at Moush, but that it would not appear that any serious steps are being taken in the direction indicated by them.

Captain Tyrrell says that the affair has been referred to the Judicial Court for an investigation, but that, as everything that happened will be set down to the insurgents, no satisfactory result can be anticipated from an inquiry conducted on such lines, whilst it is evident that the authorities are anxious to shield the malefactors.

Upon the receipt of Captain Tyrrell's telegram I made fresh representations at the Porte, and induced the Grand Vizier to telegraph again yesterday to the Moush authorities, calling for a specific report upon the conduct of the troops at Sikavi.

I on the same occasion hinted that it might be desirable to remove the Vali and the Military Commandant. His Highness seemed rather to agree with my suggestion, and gave me to understand that he would see what could be done in this sense.

I have, &c.

(Signed) N. R. O'CONOR.

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